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I Dreamt Revolution



Reswick (behind girl) with Rykov (extreme right)
on their Volga tour.

I Dreamt Revolution

by *William Reswick*



HENRY REGNERY COMPANY

Chicago • 1952

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Chicago 4, Illinois

Manufactured in the United States of America

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I Dreamt Revolution

Chapter I

An Unexpected Meeting with Stalin

IN THE RADIANCE OF A GLORIOUS sunset I stood on the upper deck of the former imperial yacht of the Romanovs, converted into a Soviet government boat for use by top commissars. It was the last day of my journey down the Volga with Lenin's successor, the Soviet Premier Alexei Rykov, and not Yagoda, the head of the GPU.

The Volga stretched to the horizon like a stream of molten gold. Gazing at the majestic scene, I listened while the Premier reminisced about his childhood and youth in the near-by city of Saratov. He recalled his sixteen years in prison and exile, his seven daring escapes from remotest Siberia, his dreams of a Russia redeemed from three centuries of Tsarist tyranny.

In parting, the commissar cordially invited me to come and visit him at the Kremlin. I thought it one of those friendly gestures common among travelers in Russia but soon forgotten, and did not take advantage of it.

One night on my way out of the Bolshoi Theater I saw Rykov and Stalin in the lobby. The Premier noticed me in the milling crowd and raised his hand in greeting. I was but a few steps from the exit when he beckoned me to come over. With some diffi-

culty I made my way through the crowded lobby, an object of excited curiosity. People stared in surprise to see a foreigner approaching the heads of the government and the ruling party.

Rykov greeted me like an old friend. He held my hand in a firm grip as he turned to Stalin. "Josif Vissarionovich," he said, "meet an American who speaks Russian with a Moscow accent."

Stalin smiled as we shook hands, and for the first time after nearly two years in Moscow I took a good look at him. He was dressed in his then usual getup—a much worn soldier's overcoat, a military cap without insignia, and a pair of black, unshined boots of the soft-leather Caucasian type. At close range I noticed that his still young and fairly handsome face bore slight traces of smallpox. He spoke Russian with a pronounced Georgian accent.

In personal contact, Stalin was strikingly unlike what he appeared to be on the platform. There he always seemed to me aloof and contemptuous of those around and before him. No matter what the occasion—a parade, a funeral, a mass meeting, a party conference—Stalin always appeared to the onlookers grim, silent, brooding, a living sphinx of the Revolution. But now, standing so close to me that I could almost hear him breathe, the man impressed me as a genial, warmhearted, if somewhat coarse and primitive, Caucasian mountaineer. His smile was no artificial grin. It was hearty, sincere, typical of those breezy mountaineers, who are always slapping people on the back and being slapped in turn. Yet in his jet black eyes there lurked the gleam of savage ferocity that characterizes those tribesmen, who even after the Revolution were still deep in their ancient feuds, murdering descendants to the third and fourth generation in revenge for real or fancied crimes committed by their ancestors. In those days my mind was filled with the tales of Stalin's ghastly deeds as military commissar on the Tsaritsin and other civil-war fronts. Four years after the war's end his sanguinary exploits as a military Chekist were still an awe-inspiring theme. Now, face to face with the man,

I stood there, unable to utter a word. I shall never know what Rykov read in my face at the moment, but he came promptly to my aid.

"Why all this rumpus in the foreign press about torture in Soviet prisons?" he asked. Recovering my breath, I remarked that my editor had cabled me on the subject.

"And what have you done about it?" asked Rykov.

"Cabled back a formal denial, as usual."

"And your bosses don't believe it?" interjected Stalin.

I tried to explain that editors as a rule are not inclined to attach any importance to formal denials, but Stalin interrupted me with a change of subject. What did I think of the ballet, *Swan Lake*, which had been given that evening? Before I had time to answer, he said:

"Here is a subject for you people to write about. Throughout the civil war and famine we preserved that magnificent troupe of dancers. There is nothing like it anywhere else in the world. I may tell you that we owe its survival mainly to Comrade Yenukidze."

We were walking towards the Troitsky gate, the main entrance to the Kremlin—for in those idealistic days even commissars walked through the streets on foot and unafraid. Rykov was silent. But Stalin stuck to his chosen subject. He praised Kudriavtseva and Smoltsov—the leading artists of the evening. Above all he lauded the ensemble for their truly wonderful precision, grace, and harmony. Within sight of the gate I looked at the Premier. He was still silent and, as it seemed to me, somewhat annoyed. I had the impression that Rykov disliked Stalin's switching of subjects to avoid discussing the ugliest of Soviet themes, the terror.

At the arched entrance to the Kremlin, Rykov reminded me of my promise to visit him. He asked me to come the next Sunday. Suddenly it occurred to me to suggest to him that all the foreign correspondents in Moscow be permitted to visit the GPU prison. It was the only way, I argued, to silence the rumors about torture. Rykov readily agreed. He promised to tele-

phone Yagoda, acting head of the GPU and our companion on the yacht.

"Have you seen him since we got back?" he asked.

On the impulse of the moment, I answered: "Frankly, I am afraid to. A call on Yagoda is enough to taint one with suspicion of espionage."

In the dim light of a lantern I saw Stalin's eyes aflame with anger, while Rykov's face turned as pale as the whitewashed arched ceiling over us. Without another word both of them turned and passed through the little wooden door of the inner entrance.

For some moments I stood underneath the archway stunned by the effect of my remark. I had plainly offended the Man of Steel. A Cheka night visit to my lodgings was not an unlikely consequence. At my door I turned away. Instinct drove me to spend the night in some safer place. In the absence of an American Embassy I could think of nothing safer than the home of The Associated Press and of big warmhearted Jim Mills, chief of their bureau. Jimmy listened to my story as he poured drinks.

"Here's to your mad courage," he said. "But Moscow is no place for you. The sooner you clear out of here, the better."

We were up most of the night. In the morning I telephoned to my lodgings and learned that nothing had happened.

"The Chekists are taking their time," said Jim, "but you will hear from them as sure as day."

His prediction turned out to be in part true. We did hear from them shortly after breakfast. But the news was no less startling than my *faux pas* at the Troitsky gate. Word came from Kogan (the censor) that all foreign correspondents in Moscow were to visit the GPU that very day. We were to meet Kogan at the Foreign Office and go with him to GPU headquarters and the main prison early in the afternoon.

Low clouds hung over Moscow when twenty-six foreign newsmen followed Kogan from the Foreign Office down Lubyansky Proyezd. At the end of the block we crossed the street

and turned the corner of the immense building. We passed two sentries at the corner, and a third at the main entrance. Over it, cemented so low it almost touched the tip of the guard's bayonet, was a bronze bust of Karl Marx. As if in grim mockery the glistening bayonet pointed to the visage of the founder of socialism. The incongruity was all the more striking because no other commissariat but this human slaughterhouse sported the revered emblem over its entrance.

In his moments of introspection Dzerzhinsky, the fanatic who founded the Cheka, solaced himself with the thought that the blood he was shedding so profusely would help cement the new and happy world conceived by Marx. With this sublime reflection he placed the bust over the Cheka's front door, and there it remained.

After passing the sentry we entered a dim lobby and mounted a wide staircase flanked by two rows of young, smartly uniformed huskies.

Severe-looking, stocky, black-bearded Trillisser, a member of the GPU Collegium, received us at the head of the stairs. With him was a whole retinue of officers.

In a loud, raspy voice the Chekist instructed Kogan to inform us that we were not to speak to any of the prisoners save one. The exception was Boris Savinkov, famed as a revolutionary terrorist under the Tsar and later as the implacable foe of bolshevism, who was serving a ten-year sentence. It seemed strange that of all the prisoners this archenemy of the Soviets should be permitted to talk to foreign newsmen. But with Yagoda it was always a rule, as he once told me on the Volga, to "mix the pleasant with the useful." For the moment we could only guess about the implications of this single exception.

To make certain that his instructions were clearly understood, Trillisser ordered the censor to give us a word-for-word translation. He then added: "Comrade Kogan, please tell our guests that they are the first foreign newsmen to enter this building. Above all, make it clear to them that in accordance with Premier Rykov's instructions the prisoners have had no advance

notice of this visit. What the correspondents will see here today is our daily routine."

The censor had no sooner completed his translation than Trilisser nodded to one of his aides. A tall man holding a bunch of keys stepped forward, saluted, and led the way down a brightly lighted, wide corridor, lined on both sides with unpainted wooden doors—a narrow slit in each door. The walls of the corridor were whitewashed, the floors polished, the ventilation perfect. I recalled a visit to the old Sing Sing prison at Ossining. By comparison Lubianka seemed like a well-run hotel.

The contrast was still greater when the jailer unlocked the first cell. It was a fair-sized room with a tall, wide window facing the square. There were no bars, no distinctive furniture, nothing to remind one of prison. The room was well heated and decently furnished. An orange-colored, upholstered sofa stood against the wall facing the window. In front of it was a white painted table with two white chairs. A sink and toilet were built into alcoves on the left. It was a perfect cell, the dream of prison reformers. The only trouble with it was its inmate. He was the living image of fright.

Trilisser evidently did not lie when he told us that the prisoners had not been notified of our coming. The unlocking of a door at Lubianka carries dire implications. In many a case it means a death sentence by the Collegium of GPU and immediate execution.

This first prisoner shown us was a tall, handsome man in his thirties. His sparsely bearded face was as white as the white-washed wall behind him. His eyes were feverishly aflame in a sudden paroxysm of fear. His bluish lips mumbled some incoherent words. As if in a last feeble effort to snatch a few more minutes of life, he backed up against the wall, stretched out his arms, and, trembling from head to foot, stood before us like a crucifixion, with knees sagging and weeping head bent in a last unspoken plea for mercy.

There was a moment of breathless suspense, pierced suddenly by a stifled cry: "*Tovarishchi!*" (Comrades!) In the gathering dusk of the oncoming night the man at the wall seemed to me

an eternal symbol of mankind's pain and undying hope. Like Christ on the cross he smiled as we turned to go. Our sudden departure must have brought him heavenly relief, almost a sense of resurrection.

There followed five more visits to cells. With but two exceptions they all produced the same devastating effect—unmitigated, appalling fright. The exceptions were an Italian whom I had often seen at the Hotel Savoy, and Boris Savinkov. I could only guess the cause of the Italian's arrest. He stood up like the Russians, but unlike them he was calm and composed. Obviously he was assured of protection by his government, a right denied to Russian citizens.

Savinkov's cell—the last one visited—was the biggest surprise of the day. It was a beautifully furnished room with thick carpets on the floor, a large mahogany desk, a blue-silk-upholstered divan, and pictures on the walls.

The great conspirator was clean-shaven and smelled of perfume as though the barber had just left him. Most astonishing of all was his state of mind. He behaved like a wealthy and gracious host receiving visitors. Is this mere bravado, I wondered, or absolute courage?

We plied Savinkov with questions, to each of which he had a quick, tactful, brilliant answer. He spoke Russian and French with equal ease. Asked what made him return to Russia, he stepped to the window. Pointing to the Kremlin, he said: "I would rather see those towers from a prison cell than walk freely in the streets of Paris."

In our admiration and pity, for to most of us he was not only a valiant leader but a brilliant writer, we avoided asking any questions that might embarrass him in the presence of his jailers. But there was one exception. Much to our chagrin, a French correspondent asked a question that instantly put Savinkov on the defensive, compelling a choice between evasion and danger: "Are the GPU horror stories true or false?"

The prisoner replied: "Speaking for myself they are obviously untrue."

I looked at Trillisser. His black eyes flashed with anger. The

prisoner, like everybody else in the room, could not help noticing the poor impression "speaking for myself" had made on the Chekist. Yet Savinkov went on talking like a free man until Trillisser put an end to the interview with the one word: "*Porá!*" (It's time!) The effect of that word was instantaneous. Savinkov turned pale and stopped talking. He still smiled as he saw us to the door, but it was a forced smile.

Savinkov was doomed. A few months following our visit to Lubianka the Soviet press carried a small item announcing his death. According to the official version he had plunged from an upper-story window to the pavement and died instantly. In well-informed circles the belief prevailed that Chekists had hurled Savinkov to his death when he refused to help them in some scheme of counterespionage.

On our way from Savinkov's cell one of Trillisser's aides informed me that Yagoda wanted to see me in his office. I wondered whether this unexpected invitation had something to do with the incident at the Troitsky gate. Mills, too, was apprehensive. We decided to go together—just in case. But the aide insisted that his orders were to "conduct to Comrade Yagoda one, not two." We were equally insistent on "two, not one." The officer went to a telephone booth, and came back all smiles. "The commissar," he informed us, "will be glad to see you both."

At his big mahogany desk in the headquarters of his dreadful power, Yagoda was no less modest and friendly than in the company of Rykov. He was talking to some officers as we entered. They took leave of their chief, saluting and clicking heels in the best Prussian manner.

The commissar, impressive in his neat GPU uniform, came forward to meet us. Far from objecting, he seemed to like the idea of Mills coming along. As on the Volga, he was eager to make friends—eager also to impress people with clipped, staccato remarks indicating that he knew much more about them than he was telling.

"We three," he said, "must not be strangers. I know all about your troubles with the militia."

He referred to our sleighing through the Moscow streets on cold nights to pick up freezing waifs and bring them to the militia stations. In doing this work of mercy we had often clashed with callous militiamen. Yagoda himself, with all his terrible record, had done much for homeless children. Together with Dzerzhinsky he would make the rounds of Moscow jails in search of juvenile delinquents. The worst of them, those with records of murder, he would place in a specially organized colony, which became famous the world over as a unique experiment in the reform of adolescent criminals. That colony was Yagoda's hobby, a way of balancing evil with good. He made us promise to visit his "children." He then switched to a subject of more immediate interest—our visit to Lubianka. In a burst of professional pride, he informed us that Savinkov had been lured to Russia by a beautiful GPU "operator," who had gone to Paris for the purpose.

"Right now," said Yagoda, "we are having trouble with the lady. She is in love with him. Lately things reached a stage where we simply had to grant her permission to stay nights in his cell."

Yagoda's eyes sparkled as he argued that the GPU's magnanimity in this case was but one example of Russia's "humane methods" of dealing with prisoners. It was characteristic, he claimed, of a "prison without bars."

"Then why this fear that we saw in the cells?" I asked him.

"I can only repeat what I said to you once before," Yagoda replied. "We are a minority in a vast country. Abolish the GPU, and we are through."

It was getting late. I reminded him that we must hurry home to write our story, or the other correspondents would be hours ahead of us. We rose to go, but Yagoda begged us to stay for dinner. His now humble tone and shy look made it obvious that with all his power this Chekist dreaded to be refused. This engineer of terror craved friendship. He hated to be left alone in the social void which he himself had done so much to create and maintain.

Mills pointed out that to stay for dinner would involve missing the morning papers. But Yagoda insisted. He telephoned

the censor, instructing him to hold all stories on the GPU visit until further notice. We finally compromised on a few drinks together.

An hour later the commissar saw us to the front door of the building where, under the bust of Karl Marx, he repeated his invitation to visit his "children."

That night after filing my story I lay awake for hours. Too much had happened during the past twenty-four hours, the unexpected meeting with Rykov and Stalin, the disturbing incident at the Kremlin gate, the visit to Lubianka.

Of all I had seen and heard at the Lubianka my deepest and most painful impression was of the fright in the eyes of the first prisoner we saw. What greater torture could there be than to know that the mere unlocking of a door might mean a short walk down the corridor past the executioner, a bullet in the back of the neck, death . . . and all by virtue of the secret decision of a so-called Collegium of three power-drunken gangsters. Faced with this stark reality, I anxiously recalled the episode at the Kremlin gate. Despite its happy ending I was again assailed by haunting fears. Essentially I was, in the eyes of men like Stalin, a Russian, born in the Ukraine. As yet there was no American consul or ambassador in Moscow. In the absence of Russo-American diplomatic relations, what importance was a police state likely to attach to my American passport? Thinking along those lines I began to feel as helpless and terror-stricken as any Soviet citizen. For the first time, Tsarist Russia from which I fled seemed to me almost a haven of refuge, a land where human life, if not liberty, was held sacred.

Chapter 2

My Dream of Revolution

AT DAWN I WAS WIDE AWAKE reminiscing about my past. At the sound of the hourly chimes from the near-by Cathedral of Our Saviour, I recalled the coronation of Tsar Nicholas II in 1896, one of my most vivid childhood memories.

Starokonstantinov, my Ukrainian birthplace, was about three-days' travel from Moscow, the scene of the coronation. Yet our local celebrations could bear comparison with those in the capital, for we lived in the Southwestern Military zone of the empire, only thirty miles from the Austrian frontier. The distinguishing feature of this region was its vast military camps with their grand-scale maneuvers which gave us, summer after summer, a foretaste of war. Against this background our local authorities staged a tremendous show. It began early in the morning with the roar of cannon, followed by a grand parade and a vast religious procession. I still remember the blare and drumming of bands, the clatter of cavalry racing in review with drawn swords ablaze in the sun, the marching columns of white-clad infantry interspersed with splashes of gold and purple, the massed regimental banners.

In the wake of the military came the priests clad in their gold-woven vestments. They were followed by bearers of icons hung

with strings of pearls. A big choir chanting the stirring Slav litany was next in line. Then came tall, bearded deacons, also in gold vestments, swinging golden censers which charged the air with an intoxicating aroma. Masses of peasants and city folk brought up the rear. With candles flickering in the breeze, they moved as if in a trance, singing the melancholy tunes of the steppe. And over it all the solemn church bells tolled out a roaring welcome to the newly anointed Tsar.

That night our sky was ablaze with fireworks, and I went to bed very late. As I fell asleep, I could still hear the music and song of the merry-makers. But it all must have come to a sudden end, for, on waking at dawn, I noticed an abrupt change in the prevailing mood. Neighbors came to our open door and windows; there was fear in their eyes, and they spoke in whispers. In answer to my insistent queries, Grandmother told me the terrible news. "Thousands of people," she said, "perished during the coronation parade in Moscow." The victims, it appeared, fell into a deep ravine dug for the purpose of keeping the Tsar at a safe distance from terrorists mingling with the crowd. Many of those fallen were crushed to death by masses of patriots pressing forward to catch a glimpse of the newly anointed ruler.

"Oh, what an omen," people moaned, "what a terrible omen!" The portent of the event seemed to them infinitely worse than the event itself. I could understand this, for I was reared in the belief that the visible, tangible world around us is but one part of our being. Daily I would hear people talk of angels and devils, of miracles worked by holy men and women, by sacred icons, and of night prayers by the dead in our churches and synagogues. These fantastic yarns, told without a shade of doubt, stuck deep in my mind and held me spellbound.

Almost everybody I knew in childhood believed in witchcraft. All my memories of illness are linked with our old witch Yavdosha. I can still see her parched, yellow, heavily wrinkled face as she bent over my bed, muttering some jumbled words which inspired hope of recovery for no better reason than that they made no sense. Only my freethinking Uncle Misha dared

laugh at her, and his daring was a matter of grave concern to the family. To make sure that no harm befell Misha, Grandmother would beg the witch "not to mind the fool." Apparently she didn't, for despite his scoffing my uncle remained in robust health.

Yavdosha attempted to stop a cholera epidemic by staging in the cemetery a public wedding of two orphans. On a bright day she brought the couple from a near-by village and led them in parade along the main highway. My father, like other parents, carried me along in his arms, for the belief prevailed that all those attending the ceremony would be immune from the plague.

A band marched in the van, playing gay tunes to which the people danced. I could see my young Aunt Sonya dancing gaily with her girl friends. Soon after, cholera struck our home. Sonya was the victim. One night I awoke in the midst of a frightful commotion. While Grandmother was dressing me I caught a glimpse of Sonya. Her beautiful face, aglow the day before, was now ashen gray, and in her eyes there was a strange, terrifying look. They led me across the street to a neighbor. In the morning I heard wailing in our home. Sonya was dead. Some time after the funeral my uncle explained to me the cause of the tragedy. Sonya and some of her friends had drunk unboiled water right after the dance. They were all stricken.

The death of the girls, coming shortly after the ghastly wedding, shook people's confidence in witchcraft. From that time on there was a stricter observance of sanitary rules.

Until the age of nine I knew very little of poverty, but then, as if overnight, it entered our home and was all the more painful because many of our relatives were rich. One of them, Aunt Riva, offered employment to my father in her big mill in a near-by village. My parents then moved away, leaving me with my grandparents to continue my studies and enter the local state school.

The cause of our troubles was a mystery to me until one eve-

ning Grandmother drew a bundle of papers from a drawer and said:

"Here is the story of our poverty—loans uncollected because your grandfather refuses to go to court. He thinks everything must be settled by voluntary arbitration. This and his endless generosity have brought us to the brink of ruin."

As long as some of these papers were valid, there was a hope that Grandfather might change his mind. But he remained adamant until most of them had lapsed. Then Grandmother secured an assignment to her of the few remaining claims, and she took complete charge of our household. Out of the wreck she managed to save our home and a leather-goods store taken over from a defaulting debtor. That large store facing the market place became in time our sole source of income as well as a hangout for peasants.

There was much talk in our store about the titled landowners, many of whom behaved as though serfdom, long since abolished, were still the law of the land. Often the peasants reacted to injustice by setting fire to the noblemen's grain. Such acts were invariably followed by arrests and charges of rebellion. Listening to these stories, I believed with the peasants that the Tsar was not at fault, that he was God's vicar on earth, the protector of the lowly, destined to redeem the land some day from these brutal nobles.

The people had a right to petition the Tsar, and on market days across the square from our store a row of scribes would sit at little tables, ready to take dictation. This dictation was a pleasant pastime. A petitioner would begin: "Great Tsar, our little father, I, your humble servant, bow low before you and strike my brow against our mother earth. Be it known to your Majesty. . . ." And here he would recount with eloquence the common complaints of the village folk: that the landlord was appropriating communal pasture land, confiscating cattle, robbing the poor of their proper share in the crop. . . .

The petition addressed and sealed, the peasant would deposit it at the local post office; and that was the end. There was no

more hope of a written reply from the Tsar than of a written answer to a divine prayer.

On passing my entrance examination to our state school, I was notified to come and be measured for my uniform. I read the notice with both joy and fear. I thrilled at the thought of marching behind a military band, for our school was a semimilitary institution with an officer of the Forty-fifth Azov Infantry in command. On holidays the school company would parade behind the regular troops and receive the salute of the commanding officer and the applause of civilians. But military training involved discipline, and that, in Tsarist Russia, meant the unchallenged right of superiors to abuse and beat their subordinates. Everywhere one could see officers slapping soldiers. It was common knowledge that schoolboys fared no better.

On receipt of the notice of admission, Grandmother announced that now was the time to collect the debt due her from Groinin, the principal. The day before school opened she came home all smiles. She had seen the debtor and in lieu of payment had secured his promise to exempt me from military training.

The privilege thus granted was not an unmixed blessing, for it placed me in the category of "untouchables"—a small group of boys despised by the military instructor and by nearly all the teachers. I had a good memory and knew much of Pushkin by heart, but never once during my first two years in school did I get a chance to recite. I would go through the daily class routine in dumb silence, painfully aware of the teacher's contempt. When certain of the answer to a mathematical problem, I would hold up my hand until my arm ached, but in vain. There was nothing to do; a rigid rule forbade us to speak unless spoken to.

My status had its advantages, however, for out on the campus students in military training were completely at the mercy of our smartly uniformed Captain Bogatiryev. He was one of the most brutal men in the army. If a student did not seem to mind a sergeant's mild slap, Bogatiryev would step in and strike with

savage ferocity, invariably drawing blood. "Bloody Bogatiryev" we called him.

After three years of study my school record was poor despite a fair knowledge of all subjects and excellence in some. When my grandmother took up the matter with the principal, he had but one answer: "Withdraw your objection to military training." The implication was clear. The choice lay between submission to violence or leaving school. In the nick of time, however, came the Tsar's decree—prompted, it was assumed, by an appeal from Count Leo Tolstoy—forbidding corporal punishment.

Within a fortnight I thrilled to the kind words of Zaslavsky, a new principal who came to us from the provincial capital accompanied by several teachers. In contrast to his bulky, grim predecessor, Zaslavsky was a spare man of gentle mien. He addressed us as "children," ending his brief speech with the assurance that Captain Safronov, our new military instructor, was a liberal officer, known for his humane treatment of soldiers.

Thus at the age of twelve I was freed both from my sense of inferiority and from my dread of violence.

By way of compensating us "inferiors" for past sufferings, the teachers urged us to join a newly formed choir and the drama circle. At last I got my chance to recite, first in class and later on the stage. The unforeseen result was my rapid advancement to local stardom.

The liberal movement was sweeping the country. Under its influence people began to take a keen interest in every parting of the ways with reaction. In this spirit the elite of our town welcomed the news of our staging of *Boris Godunov*. The most prominent man among them was the wealthy timber merchant David Chatskiss, long known as a generous donor to worthy causes.

On the eve of the first rehearsal Captain Safronov, our stage director, announced that Manya Chatskiss, David's beautiful daughter, would play with us in *Boris Godunov*. We expected

to meet a haughty, spoiled girl. To our surprise Manya was so frightened at the beginning of the rehearsal that she all but lost her voice and seemed incapable of grasping her cues. It took the captain some time to restore her poise. When he finally succeeded we all felt relieved and tried our best to make her feel at home.

We rehearsed nearly all that day. Towards evening Safronov suggested that Manya and I practice our leading roles at her home. I saw the girl to her carriage and she invited me for a ride. In a few minutes we were over the bridge and out in the open country. The sun had just set. It was harvest time. The peasants were still at work in the fields, singing their melancholy airs. From a near-by camp came strains of a gay military dance. Strings of multicolored paper lanterns lighted up the park straight ahead of us. It was getting dark. As we turned back towards town it occurred to me that never before had I seen such a wondrous sky or heard such enchanting songs. Even old, familiar sights seemed to have taken on strange, fantastic shapes. At the gate of Manya's big home with its beautifully landscaped garden, she reminded me of our rehearsal.

I looked up at the brightly lighted arched windows. Through one of them I could see a magnificent chandelier and purple walls hung with portraits in big gilded frames. Never before had I seen such splendor. It was like a palace in a fairy tale, and I was frightened at the mere thought of going inside that mansion.

I heard steps in the garden. Someone was coming towards us. "Good night," I stammered. "I'll see you at school."

But Manya held my hand. She moved nearer until I could see the pupils of her eyes and feel her warm breath. "We must kiss," she whispered, "or you'll never come here." I obeyed instantly, and it cured me of my fright.

Two months later when we played *Boris Godunov*, Manya and I were close friends.

Colonel Valoshin, commander of the Forty-fifth Azov Infantry, came on the stage after the dying scene and kissed the leading players before a cheering audience. A day later Manya's par-

ents gave a party for the players. My wealthy Aunt Ina Pokhes, a friend of Manya's mother, took that opportunity to broach our betrothal. Aunt Ina had a weakness for matchmaking. In her eyes Manya and I were almost ready for marriage.

Dvizhenie (Movement) was an ominous word in Tsarist Russia. Whenever the terrorist section of the Socialist Revolutionary Party pulled off one of their assassination plots, I would hear people murmur about the "dvizhenie." When, as happened many a summer night, the peasants in a near-by village set fire to their landowner's grain, I would see people gaze at the red sky and mutter, "dvizhenie." In those four syllables, the cautious would explain nearly every manifestation of the vast struggle for Russia's freedom. As we grew older Manya and I began to take a great interest in the meaning of the word. Both of us had revolutionary backgrounds. With Manya it was her cousin Dunya, who, although released from prison only the year before, was again active in Kiev, the underground center of the Ukraine. My cousin Raisa, a student in the University of Kiev, had been exiled for heading a May Day demonstration. It cost Aunt Ina (her mother) a fortune to buy off half of a five-year sentence. On her return home Raisa, although a grief to her mother, was the pride of our intelligentsia. A record of over two years in exile was a badge of distinction which both my grandmother and Aunt Ina tried vainly to belittle.

At the age of thirteen I managed to secure admission for Manya and myself to one of Raisa's secret lectures. There I met Captain Safronov as well as other teachers and learned for the first time that they were all members of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. From that day on Manya and I rarely missed a lecture. We took up the study of revolutionary literature, read the illegal books, and dreamed continually of daring exploits in the underground.

It was in the spring of 1903, and I was still only thirteen, when we began to dream revolution. The summer that followed was inordinately hot and dry. The concentration of troops in the

neighboring camp of Mashibesh imparted a warlike aspect to our whole countryside. For nearly a week the air rang with the music and songs of soldiers on the march. In the midst of this excitement word came from Captain Safronov, who was already in camp with his regiment, that he was in need of youngsters to carry illegal literature to the camps. His messenger, Vassya Lashkov, explained that propaganda during maneuvers, though dangerous for adults, was safe for youths, particularly first offenders. If caught, they could get off with a warning. The only problem was that of housing the youngsters somewhere near the camp. Lashkov proposed that Manya persuade her parents to invite our school troupe to their country home for rehearsals. Everyone in the group, Vassya assured us, was eager to take a hand in the work.

Manya grasped at this first chance to join the underground. She told Lashkov to go ahead with his plans, assuring him that her parents would be glad to have us for the summer. A week later we were out in the country, ready for action.

My first venture in the underground turned out to be mere routine—well organized and thoroughly protected against risk. Illegal literature came from the center once or twice a week. Vassya would hand us the bundles, instructing each one to enter the camp through a certain gate. We would always find the gates manned by friendly sentries. Once inside the camp, we would proceed through a certain lane, count a given number of tents, and deposit the papers in the last (invariably empty) tent. Some time after we left, the literature would be distributed by comrades in uniform. This limited assignment we carried out for weeks without ever coming in contact with any of the men we were supposed to propagandize.

But one day I raised a flap of canvas, and there within a hand's reach I saw an officer. He lay on a cot staring at me with wide-open, bleary eyes. At the head of the cot stood a table cluttered with bottles and glasses. The air was heavy with the stench of vodka and stale tobacco. In my surprise I dropped the papers. Then for some moments I stood there unable to decide whether

the thing to do was to bend down and grab them or turn and run without them. I looked to the officer for a cue. To my surprise he grinned at me and said: "Here, lad, come nearer. Forget the damned papers. Those beasts out there can't read anyway."

There was an avid leer in the man's eyes that repelled me, and I stepped back, intending to run. But he leaped from his bed and caught me around the waist. I saw foam on his mouth and shrieked for help. He ran in a panic, leaving me alone in the tent. Outside, I heard people shouting and laughing. I ducked through the canvas and bolted to the nearest gate.

Lashkov, to whom I reported the incident, said that the officer, a well-known pervert, was not likely to cause any trouble. Still, to avoid another meeting with him, it was decided to keep me away from the camp.

For the rest of the summer I stayed at Manya's home, where Captain Safronov also spent his week ends. He was a great lover of horses and taught us the art of riding. It has remained my life-long hobby.

On my return home I found Grandmother in tears. An officer in the camp, who had learned of the incident and knew that Ina Pokhes was my aunt, had made her pay him money to keep quiet.

"I know Manya is in it," said Grandmother, "but she can afford it. Her father has enough money to buy up all the gendarmes in the Ukraine. But a poor boy like you—if you ever get caught, it will be Siberia unless we manage to get you over the border."

I promised Grandmother and Aunt Ina to steer clear of our local underground.

After that experience Manya and I decided to bide our time until we were old enough to enter the University of Kiev. In this state of mind we read of the event that led to the abortive Revolution of 1905. It was a manifesto on the front page of our provincial paper; a photograph of the Tsar topped the page. We were at war with Japan! That same day Manya's father told us to stay away from any antiwar demonstrations. Manya remon-

strated, reminding her father of his sympathies with the Revolution. However, he warned me sternly: "Now that we are at war, you must not get Manya or yourself mixed up in anything. If you do, I shall myself turn you over to the gendarmes."

Shortly after that talk a shocking incident rocked our community. A battalion of troops was about to leave for the front—a battalion made up of men selected by a special commission that went through the ranks, picking soldiers as they would cattle. Superb physical specimens from regiments all over Russia were to form a Far Eastern army, the idea being that big Russians would scare the little Japs. "We will snow them under with our caps," was the slogan of the day. One way for revolutionary and liberal officers to show their resentment against this policy was to embrace the picked men and kiss them in parting. The scene occurred on our market place in full view of a demonstrative crowd. Women wept hysterically. There were chorused yells: "Down with tyranny! Down with the hangmen!"

As this spontaneous outburst gathered momentum, the police remained strangely inactive. But Cossacks summoned to the scene tore into the crowd with savage ferocity, striking down everyone within reach.

Despite David Chatskiss's warning, I went to the demonstration with a group of students. Flanked by officers, we defied the cavalrymen with repeated yells: "Down with tyranny! Down with bureaucracy!" Under instructions from Captain Safronov we carefully avoided any mention of the Tsar. Shortly after their arrival the Cossacks surrounded us and led us to the gendarmery. There our captain and some of his friends came to plead for us. The colonel of the gendarmes seemed impressed. He finally compromised by deciding to hold us for a hearing in a civil court.

"Under the new rules," he said, "I could take administrative measures, but in deference to your captain I am giving you boys this one chance."

An hour later they brought us into a crowded courtroom. Safronov was already there, talking to a lawyer.

"A mere trifle," he was saying, "but what worries me is His Honor's weakness."

The judge was an old alcoholic known for his drunken rages on the bench. People were always wondering what influence kept this profligate in judicial office.

As we stood there, speculating on his probable condition, he emerged from a door in the rear. Visibly groggy from a fresh swig he mounted the dais, mumbling: "Down with the Tsar, eh? I'll teach you a lesson."

As the clerk read our names, the judge picked on Alyosha Rapaport, saying: "This Jew is no doubt the leader. Jews always are. Rapaport! I'll have you whipped! Come nearer, Jew. Let me look at you."

I saw my friend step forward and turn to our lawyer hoping to hear from him a word of protest. But the lawyer remained speechless—a silent witness to an outrage. Before I had time to reflect, I was at Alyosha's side, addressing the judge. "Your Honor," I heard myself say, "in your present condition you are not fit to try a dog."

Instantly the courtroom became a howling mob. People yelled, clapped, whistled. There were cries: "Hurrah!" "Bravo!" And again, as on the market place, the students chorused: "Down with tyranny!" "Down with the hangmen!" There was a sudden outburst of laughter. Someone near me cried: "Look at the judge! He has gone crazy!" I looked up and saw the dignitary wobble in his chair, his face a grinning mask. The spectators yelled louder, turning the judicial proceedings into a farce. The colonel seemed to enjoy the show, for he let us go at once.

Out in the corridor I met Grandmother and Aunt Ina. They were unimpressed by the praise I received from those around me.

"Hero, eh?" said Grandmother. "Well, I might as well tell you right now. You are on your way to America. We are not going to see you shot."

"And that is bound to come," seconded Aunt Ina. "First the officer in camp, now the judge. And Manya's father is fiercely

angry. In his ugly mood he might pay the gendarmes to have you arrested."

Outside we were joined by Manya and Captain Safronov. Manya looked worried and tearful. She confirmed what Aunt Ina had said about her father, blaming it all on the war. Safronov explained that under pressure of the war hysteria, liberals like David Chatskiss were always apt to turn superpatriots, eager to prove their loyalty by denouncing others.

"Remember," he said, "it is the invisible and intangible that one must always fear in Russia. After what has happened I think you ought to cross the border tonight. Tomorrow may be too late."

It was lifesaving advice. Late that night my parents came from the village. After a brief family consultation Grandfather went out in search of a frontier guide. He returned after a while with a tall, husky peasant. After much wailing that was painfully reminiscent of Aunt Sonya's funeral, my father and the guide brought me to the Austrian frontier. There, within sight of a black and white striped sentry box, I kissed my father's tear-moistened face and heard his stifled cry as we said farewell. Two armed soldiers stepped out of the dark and held out their hands. After receiving their pay, they grounded their rifles and let me pass.

A few steps farther on I met an elderly man who held up a lantern. He was my Austrian guide. He led me to a near-by house where I spent the night. In the morning I was on my way to New York.

Within a year a punitive expedition went through our province executing many a youth accused of distributing revolutionary literature in camps or barracks. It did not matter when they had done it. Among those shot were boys charged with distributing illegal pamphlets long before the war.

Sixteen years went by before I came, one snowy night, to the same Russo-Austrian (now Russo-Polish) frontier to rescue my family from a blood-drenched Ukraine. A revolution had occurred and the civil war had just come to an end. Yet there

seemed to have been little change in the "oiling" system. Bribery was still rife on the border, only the rates were higher. Like my grandfather years back, I found a husky frontier guide who, after paying five hundred American dollars to a Red Army officer, delivered my family on Austrian soil. They were all there except Grandfather who had died. My grandmother, then eighty years old, was so elated on seeing me, so stunned by the power of those almighty dollars, that she confided to an innkeeper on the border: "My grandson is the Tsar of America."

While I was in Russia, emigration had seemed to me no better than exile. But once across the border my feelings changed. Those last hectic hours at home began to seem like a nightmare that would not fade on waking. Among the painful memories of threats, warnings, and tears, my mind dwelt constantly on Safronov's never-to-be-forgotten words: "It is the invisible and intangible that one must always fear in Russia." Those words cast a gruesome light on the whole Tsarist complex with its pogroms, its savage Cossacks, its sadism, corruption, and abysmal ignorance. There were tears in my heart for Manya, but I was not sorry to be on my way to the free New World.

I reached New York on a sultry morning in July 1904. Before the day was over, a group of us were led to Seward Park, where employers in those days would come in search of green hands. A man in a brown derby informed me in Russian that he was the owner of a tearoom called Odessa.

"Ever been to Odessa?" he asked.

"Just for a visit."

"Then you will do."

For about three months I toiled in that restaurant, washing dishes in daytime and helping serve parties at night. The pay was three dollars a week, plus two or three dollars in tips. Poor food, coupled with little sleep, brought on moments of weariness and despair.

In the autumn I got my first glimpse of a free country in ac-

tion. A presidential campaign was on. Night after night I would listen to speakers and join in the applause. Though vague about the issues involved, and ignorant of the language, I loved to watch free men speak their minds without fear of Cossacks.

My first winter in America was a cruel, bitter struggle. I left the tearoom in late autumn and drifted from job to job. I delivered groceries, sold newspapers, peddled candy, shoveled snow, worked in a buckle shop, slept in an unheated Allen Street loft infested with rats. I knew no trade, had no means of learning one, and was too proud to ask for help. All this combined to make life extremely difficult, at times almost unbearable. But I never despaired. I knew that ignorance of the language was at the bottom of nearly all my troubles. My desperate efforts to learn English quickly cost me many a job. As soon as I saved up a few dollars I would quit and spend days in the Astor Street library, studying the language.

Two incidents of that miserable winter linger in my memory. One of them occurred in the buckle shop on Allen Street, the other in a snow-shovel queue a few blocks away.

The boss on Allen Street undertook to teach me the buckle trade provided I would work two months for a three-dollar weekly wage. He also gave me permission to sleep in his shop. The place had no steam heat and was infested with rats. "That shouldn't worry you," he said, and pointed to a big yellow cat. For about a week I slept in his loft on a narrow table, using my torn coat as cover and some rags for a pillow. On a three-dollar wage I was extremely limited in my diet and leaned heavily on dry bread, always keeping a loaf handy. At night it lay on a chair near my improvised bed. As long as the cat was around I had little fear, but one day the cat vanished.

That night I dreamt of rats. They were jumping all over me, biting my face, hands, and throat. It was one of those awful nightmares when the mind is almost fully awake yet the body remains inert. For some moments I lay in agony, unable to stir. When I finally came to, a big rat was skipping across my face which was wet with blood. Others were devouring the bread

and racing all over the place. I jumped off the table and ran from the shop bleeding. I ran up Allen Street as far as Houston. There I saw a policeman. He led me to a doorway and called an ambulance. I was taken to a hospital where they bandaged my wounds and let me go.

A week later, penniless and hungry, I was at the corner of Second Avenue and Houston Street waiting in line for a snow shovel. It was shortly after two in the morning when I took my place in a queue nearly two blocks long. Until dawn we stood there lashed by a heavy snowstorm. Rigid with cold and weary after hours of waiting, we pressed close to one another to keep from freezing. My shoes were torn, my coat in rags. I felt an icy crust hardening around my feet. My shirt, wet from the snow drifting through the loose coat collar, stuck to my back like a sheet of ice. When they finally handed me a shovel I was so weak and rigid with cold that it fell out of my hands. The man behind me picked it up, threw his right arm around my waist, and tried to help me along to Third Avenue where we were to clear the tracks for the stalled trolleys. I got no farther than the corner of Third Avenue and Houston Street. There I collapsed in the snow and was taken to a hospital for the second time in less than a fortnight.

The one compensation for those hardships was my keen appreciation of the American environment. Everywhere I could see the sharp contrast between freedom and tyranny. And the more I saw, the firmer grew my determination to resist the efforts of Manya and my family to bring me home immediately after the end of war. While reading their letters I would recall Safronov's words about the "invisible and intangible" evils lurking in Russia. I would dream of those evils at night and wake up happy in the thought that I was thousands of miles from Russia.

In the spring I decided to improve my English by living where no other language was spoken. I applied to an agency and was offered a job on a farm run by a widow and her three sons. To one of them, who came to town in search of "hands," I bared my muscular arm, explaining that I had had no experience and

could offer little more than willingness to work. "You will do," he said, and a day later I was out in the fields.

After nearly three years of work as a farm hand I returned to New York, where I went on a hunt for some odd job at which I could work evenings and have my days free for study. A student whom I met at the Astor library offered to help me. He was a shirt ironer. By working evenings in a laundry he had earned enough to pay his way through college. The trade offered, in addition, unusual opportunities for travel on tourist ships equipped with mechanized laundries.

In six months of apprenticeship I learned enough of the trade to get a job aboard the luxury steamer *Cincinnati*. The tour took me to Madeira, Spain, Gibraltar, Algiers, Genoa, Naples, the French Riviera, Egypt, Greece, Palestine, and Turkey. During the voyage, as on the farms, I indulged in my favorite pastime, reading and study. On my return to New York I entered the Collegiate School, and in less than a year was credited with seventy-two Regents points—more than enough to admit me to a university. I then studied law at New York University, graduated with an LL.B. degree, passed the bar examinations, and was admitted to practice in New York State.

Throughout the years of law study I earned my livelihood translating and writing. I began by contributing short stories to the Collegiate magazine. Later I made translations from Russian for the *New York Times Current History Magazine* and for Ilya Tolstoy. I also wrote scenarios for the movie director Kimball Young.

Beatrice, a fellow student who had helped me in my work, became a devoted friend. We had two things in common: an unhappy childhood and a lonely youth. We married as students and were, before my admission to the bar, a family of five.

Realization of My Dream

FOR THIRTEEN YEARS I HAD NO thought of ever returning to Tsarist Russia. But overnight the Revolution changed my mind. From the day in February 1917 when the first news came, I yearned continually to see again the land of my birth and early childhood.

The opportunity came in 1922 when Herbert Hoover's American Relief Administration was fighting famine in the drought-stricken Ukraine. Louis Strauss, then Hoover's secretary, made it possible for me to go to Russia and help in the distribution of food and medicine.

Towards the end of July 1922, I boarded a U.S. destroyer bound East from the Dardanelles. At dawn on the second day out we came within sight of Odessa. The fading stars still lingered on the Western horizon, but in the East the sky was already aglow with the coming sun. I stood on the bridge with the officers in command, gazing at scenes that stirred poignant memories of childhood: the majestic seashore with its flowery promenades, the boulevards with their palatial homes, the magnificent parks and squares, the blue- and gold-domed churches, and in the center the sumptuous municipal theater—a replica of the Grand Opera in Paris. From a distance nothing seemed changed. But as the ship nosed its way into the inner harbor, we

were surprised by its weird calm. Except for a few seemingly deserted barges, the once teeming port lay desolate—an immense watery graveyard. There were no sirens, no signals from shore. Nothing stirred. A deadly hush pervaded the city.

For an hour and a half our siren called at two-minute intervals without evoking a sign of life. We stood on the bridge numb with misgivings, unable to venture even a guess as to the cause of this ghostly silence.

In later years I learned to take the peculiarities of Soviet behavior as a matter of course. But that morning I could not possibly believe that an American warship, arriving on an errand of mercy, would be kept waiting for a pilot simply because the authorities assigned to meet it, having been in conference till past midnight, were now fast asleep. Yet this, we learned, was the cause of the delay.

We signaled for a pilot shortly after seven o'clock in the morning, and it was half-past eight when we finally saw a launch leave shore and head in our direction. There were five men on the boat. Their clothes were a curious mixture of military and civilian. Their gray cotton pants were soiled and frayed. They all wore khaki tunics buttoned at the neck and criss-crossed with Sam Browne belts. Two of them were barefoot; two wore old, misshapen sandals. Only one, the youngest and apparently the leader, was properly shod in a pair of black boots. His four comrades stood behind him, each holding an empty hamper of woven straw.

The young man grasped the rope ladder and climbed up swiftly, followed by his colleagues. After an exchange of salutes with our captain and officers, he asked for and received the shipping papers. He then nodded to one of his subordinates, who put down his hamper and took hold of the steering wheel. Slowly the ship headed for the inner harbor.

For some minutes we all stood on the bridge without uttering a word. The contrast between our well-equipped, well-fed group and the famished condition of our hosts with their simple peasants' baskets was not conducive to conversation. The neat

snow-white uniforms and shining footgear of the American naval officers threw into sharp relief the ragged clothes and mud-crusts bare feet of the Soviet officials. And to make it all the more pathetic, our gigantic captain fairly dwarfed the puny leader of the five, who, even in his high-heeled black boots, barely reached the captain's broad shoulders. The captain wondered how this slight youth had earned the high rank of commissar. He suggested that I break the ice by complimenting him on his achievement. The moment they heard me speak Russian all five of them became suddenly oblivious of their official dignity and crowded around me excitedly, explaining why they had come on board with those empty hampers.

"We are absolutely famished," they cried. "So are our families and the whole city. We are perishing of hunger and typhus. People are dying like flies."

When I translated this to the captain he asked me to assure them that their hampers would be filled with food as soon as the ship anchored. They surrounded the captain then, overwhelming him with handshakes and profuse thanks. Thus assured of something to eat, they turned their minds to another topic of primary interest—their American relatives.

The pilot was the only one of the five without kin in America, hence with no hope of receiving a food package. As if eager to make up for the loss, he wanted to know how soon the Americans would have their revolution. I began to explain that they had already had one, but the little leader hastily changed the subject.

"Byelsky is my name," he said. "Yasha Byelsky, member of the presidium of the Odessa Cheka* during the civil war, now Commissar of the port of Odessa."

There was a gleam of pride in the boy's eye as he stressed the dread word "*Che-ká*." He was the notorious "Yasha" who two years before had crushed the South Ukrainian officers' rebellion in a welter of blood. I did not know it then. And I could not

* Cheka was the name of the Soviet political police during the civil war. Its name was changed soon after to GPU, then NKVD, now MVD.

foresee that this tiny youngster was destined for the leading role in the bloody trio (Yezhov-Byelsky-Berman) who in 1937 carried out Stalin's dreadful purge which practically destroyed the Bolshevik Party as organized by Lenin.

At the headquarters of ARA in Odessa I learned that the situation on the Volga was better, both in regard to food and to the typhus epidemic, than it had been the year before. But it was worse in the Ukraine. Odessa was one of the most stricken spots. Yekaterinoslav was another. I was to proceed to Yekaterinoslav on a provision train and help the Americans already there in the work of distribution. The train would leave that very night. There remained only a few hours to see the city.

After lunch I went for a walk. My uncle, whom as a boy I visited in Odessa, had been dead for some time, but I wanted to see his home again. The way led across the Tolchok—Odessa's main market. The big trading center was now a camp crowded with sick and hungry peasants who had fled from their villages, hoping to find food and shelter in the city. Finding neither, they had gathered in the open spaces to beg for bread. Many of them were delirious, some were dying. In a roped-off square I saw uncovered corpses. The delay in burial, a militiaman informed me, was due to overwork and underfeeding among the city's sanitary workers. They were days behind in their work.

I walked on, feeling my way through a mass of half-naked men, women and children. On Ryshelyevskaya, a street of fond memories, I saw a charred framework of brick and wood. It was all that remained of my uncle's home.

For hours I wandered about the city, keenly conscious of my clothes and shoes which contrasted painfully with the rags and bare feet of the Russians. In the dusk of the oncoming night, these unfortunates moved about like lost souls, wan, hollow-eyed, forlorn.

Back at headquarters, the quiet, dark garden behind the building seemed to me like an oasis in a desert. There, alone on a bench, I sat and recalled my childhood dreams of revolution. They were the dreams of many generations, and here was their

fulfillment—this appalling nightmare on the streets of a starved and dying city.

"Is this all?" I wondered. "Shall I find something that is worth the sacrifice, the terrible price in blood and pain?"

Word came shortly after midnight that my provision train would leave at 1:00 A.M. I rode to the station through pitch-dark streets. A few cabbies and patrolling militiamen made up the night life of what used to be the gayest city in Russia. Like the market place, the square in front of the station was crowded with hungry, sick, and dying people.

Long after one o'clock in the morning we were still at the station, waiting for a machine-gun detachment which was to protect the train en route. The civil war had been over for nearly two years, but the forests still swarmed with armed bands that made travel hazardous. Food, a most precious commodity in this second year of the famine, invited attack. Extra precautions were being taken by the man in charge—Commander Vanya, they called him. He entered my compartment, offering to take the upper berth if I preferred the lower. He was a tall, handsome young Slav, with the smile and manners of a good-natured child. To a conductor who came for instructions he gave the order to start. The night was almost gone when the train began to move.

In the morning we sat watching the countryside through an open window. The rails were so in need of repair that our locomotive, ancient and rickety, had a hard time finding something to get hold of. Slowly, with laborious effort, the train rolled along through a barren land. At rare intervals we passed small patches of green where three or four cattle were grazing. Here and there, scattered over the fields, lay dead cows and horses. The blazing sun beat down on the carcasses, turning them into hives of buzzing flies. A stench of carrion floated through the open windows of the train. I was painfully reminded of the vast herds that had once filled these Ukrainian plains.

My companion leaned out of the window, gazing wistfully at

the desolate scene. For some time he sat there speechless, as if numbed by the devastation of the countryside. Then, without turning his head, he said:

"This will be my sixth trip to Yekaterinoslav. What you see here is just a beginning. Wait till we get deeper into the country. A year ago millions died on the Volga. I went through villages turned into graveyards. You see these animal carcasses here. That's what happened to men. And why? I ask you. I hear you're Russian by birth. Perhaps you can answer the question every Russian is asking! What did we fight for? Why did we shed all that blood?"

On my way to Russia, and long before, I had been hearing stories about Cheka terror and espionage. I was startled to hear a Russian speak thus without caution. I asked him to explain.

"Oh, that!" said the officer, laughing. "What's there to be afraid of when the Chekists are hungry too? No, comrade, it isn't the Cheka we're afraid of these days. Hunger and typhus are far worse than getting shot."

At every station people crowded about the train with outstretched hands. All along the road they wept for bread, many of them shivering under a blazing sky.

In the country it was far worse even than in Odessa. There were no doctors in the small communities, no nurses. People moved about the platforms, stepping over prostrate bodies, and the groans of the sick mingled with the never ceasing cry: "*Khlyeb! Khlyeb! Mi golodni!*" (Bread! Bread! We're hungry!)

Day after day, as we advanced deeper into the country, progress became slower. We had reckoned on covering the normal run of thirty-six hours in three days, but it began to look as if we could not make it in a week. A stationmaster, reporting on the state of the road ahead, said: "The rails are crumbling. Chances are you'll never get there."

Gradually I lost all sense of caution. Like Commander Vanya and his men, I moved about among those stricken with typhus, oblivious of danger. I forgot, too, my fears of armed bands. The

thought of clashing with bandits, so terrifying at the start of the journey, seemed trivial in this jungle of pain.

At a distance we could see Yekaterinoslav, silvery under a full moon. The locomotive climbed a steep hill, and there at our feet lay the quaint town, nestling around an immense blue-domed cathedral. It was shortly after midnight when the train drew up at the station. There were few people about. A young girl, followed by a man in his thirties, ran along the platform. They were waving to Commander Vanya. He jumped while the train was still in motion and almost fell into their outstretched arms. For a minute or two I stood by, watching an impromptu love scene. All three of them joined in an embrace, planting resounding kisses on lips, cheeks, and brows. At last Vanya turned to me to introduce his friends. They were Comrade Savelyev,* the regional Commissar of Relief, and Irina, a Russian employee of the American Relief Administration.

Irina was a girl of rare beauty. Her attire, like that of most Russian women in those days, consisted of a rough cotton dress and sandals worn on bare feet. The naturalness of her face, untouched by cosmetics, enhanced her charm. With every move of her agile figure she betrayed energy, a quality most unusual amidst the almost universal fatigue. She greeted me with a friendly light in her azure eyes.

A uniformed man summoned her to the railroad office. Vanya took the opportunity to tell me she was Princess Irina—a descendant of one of Russia's foremost families. Revolution had caught her vacationing on a near-by estate. The revolting peasants dealt harshly with her relatives but spared Irina.

Presently the girl returned to the platform, waving a batch of papers. After a hurried report to the commissar she graciously assumed the role of hostess.

"You gentlemen must be famished," she said. "There is a samovar and food waiting for you at headquarters."

Outside the station a rickety car was parked at the curb. It was

* Names of still living friends have been changed to protect their safety from prosecution.

soon loaded with our valises and some canned food. We piled in on top of them. Irina sat next to the chauffeur.

We rode along the city's main boulevard and climbed a hill overlooking the Dnieper River. Straight ahead of us stretched a beautifully landscaped park. In the moonlight I could make out a magnificent mansion set amidst groves and gravel paths that meandered to the banks of the wide stream. It was the former home of Countess Ivetskaya, now regional relief headquarters.

For some moments we admired the panorama in silence. I had a fleeting vision of a dead world come back to life. The scene reminded me vividly of the estate of General Orshevsky near my own childhood home in the Ukraine. From a distance everything looked as if the ravages of civil war had left it untouched, but the illusion vanished as we turned into a lane that led to the main gate. Here barbed wire stretched along either side of us. The buildings beyond the wire were either partly or completely demolished.

"The Cheka had their headquarters here for years," said Vanya. "They are now—the GPU, that is—on the main boulevard." He turned back to point to a huge building all lighted up even though it was long past midnight.

There were soldiers with machine guns at the main entrance to the estate. They asked for passwords and carefully examined our documents. The reason was soon explained. The provisions shipped to this district were being stored in a warehouse behind the palace, and the supplies brought on our train were to be moved here during the night. It was a treasure so tempting to hungry desperadoes as to make extraordinary precautions imperative.

For months this fortified mansion was to be my home and office. The daily sight of *agonki*—"lines of agony," as they called them—never ceasing cries of anguish, heartbreaking groans of victims made inarticulate by grief, and occasional armed night raids on our stores by hungry rebels were among my first impressions of the chaos in the provinces.

During the day the palace and the grounds around it were

alive with feverish activity. There were classified queues—doctors, engineers, clergymen, lawyers, representatives of feeding centers for children. There were delegations from industrial plants paralyzed by lack of machinery. The longest queue was of men and women who belonged nowhere; they were just hungry or sick and pleading for bread and medicine. The numbers of urgent cases grew from day to day.

My command of Russian proved to be of help in handling these queues. Irina, or "Comrade Princess," as they called her, never seemed to tire. She was always at my side, ever ready with her amazing memory for detail and faces, with her boundless compassion for all in need. To expedite our work, Irina and I dispensed with "system" and red tape and went directly to the queues. In this way we were able to take care of thousands of victims more swiftly and with greater kindness than was possible under a regime of strict formality. Relief Commissar Savelyev was impressed. Late one afternoon he came out from town to compliment us on our work. After a brief inspection he turned to me and said: "I shall speak to Beringer about you." (Beringer was the American in charge of our district.)

He must have done so that evening, for the next morning at breakfast Beringer was enthusiastic about the way Savelyev and I got along together. Savelyev, it seems, had had one recalcitrant American sent out of the country. A fanatic Leninist, Savelyev was a tough man to deal with. But he was devoted to his job and liked devotion in others. As the success of our work depended on good relations with Soviet officials, Beringer offered me a sideline job as contact man. From that day on I was the trouble shooter of our district. Whenever there was friction, either at Yekaterinoslav or in neighboring towns, it was up to me to iron things out.

One day our headquarters in Moscow wired us an urgent order to go over to the neighboring town of Alexandrovsk and straighten out a flagrant violation by the local officials of the American-Soviet relief agreement. A special shipment of food, sent by Americans born in Alexandrovsk, had been held up by

local authorities who were determined to feed proletarians only. This meant that all the former bourgeoisie, whose kin in New York happened to be the main donors, must be denied the food paid for by their relatives.

As my companion on this diplomatic mission, Savelyev gave me his chief assistant Garin, a man of excellent character and education. On the way, Garin undertook to enlighten me on the difficulties we were likely to meet. Gromov, head of the local party cell, who had caused the trouble, was a staunch "Stalinist," he said. It was the first time I had ever heard this word, but it was already in common use among Lenin's followers as a term of opprobrium for Stalin's clique. Garin had never seen Gromov, but he had heard a good deal about his intrigues in the regional Apparat* on behalf of Stalin against Trotsky.

The year before, Garin informed me, very few people in the Ukraine knew much about Stalin. But during the ten months since his appointment as Secretary of the Russian Communist Party, he had been taking advantage of Lenin's critical illness to plant his creatures in all the regional party cells. This Gromov, whom we were about to see, was one of them.

"From what they tell me about Gromov," said Garin, "he's not unlike Stalin—brutal, cunning, insincere, and a chronic liar. He's typical of the riffraff with whose aid Stalin seems determined to rule the country."

He went on to explain that men like Gromov were disgruntled members of the military Cheka, who during the civil war had served under Stalin on one front or another. Like him, they had developed a taste for wielding emergency power over life and death, and, like him, they had no place in a party dedicated to peaceful endeavor—a party in need not of killers but of brains, education, training.

* It should be remembered that in a one-party state this party machine is potentially more powerful than the official government. The conflict between the two will become apparent frequently in the course of my story. It was mainly by appointing men personally loyal to him in key positions throughout the Apparat that Stalin, as General Secretary, consolidated his power while leaving the government in other hands.

"Having none of these qualifications," Garin said, "they hate and envy their superiors. It is with the help of such toughs and gangsters that Stalin is now intriguing against Trotsky."

To my query how one man could, in a matter of months, get such a grip on a ruling party, Garin replied:

"Nothing simpler. Stalin is taking advantage of Russia's low intelligence level. The few intellectuals we have must run the government and industry. This leaves the party wide open to dumbbells with a flair for politics."

He went on to explain that the drift of intellectuals away from the party machine had started long before Stalin became General Secretary. Lenin had warned against criminals in the Apparatus and demanded that they be removed. But he had fallen sick before the work was done. This gave Stalin his opening. As yet, according to Garin, Stalin was far from being the undisputed ruler either of the Communist Party or of Russia. He was still only reaching out for control of the provinces. To attain it, he was planting his trusted henchmen in the party cells.

As an example, Garin mentioned Stalin's chief organizer in the Ukraine. "That ignorant ruffian Klim Voroshilov," he called him. At the age of ten this future War Commissar was begging alms in the village of Tikhoye near Yekaterinoslav. Now he was one of Stalin's chief organizers. Early that summer he had come to Yekaterinoslav, and in less than a week had managed to plant a Stalinist in nearly every party cell in the region. Many of them were former military Chekists.

By the time I reached Alexandrovsk, I felt very much like a playgoer who, accidentally stepping behind the stage, glimpses the scaffolding supporting the scenery.

Over at the local soviet we were met by three men. One of them, a big red-bearded fellow, introduced himself as Comrade Pavlov, chairman of the local executive. The other two were party members. We followed them to a room in the rear where there was a table covered with a red cloth and surrounded with chairs. The last to enter the room was a small, consumptive-looking man in his thirties. Without a word or nod to anyone

he pulled a chair from under the table, shoved it to the door, and sat down as if determined to bar intruders.

Pavlov, the chairman, opened the conference by inviting me to state our grievance. I read our instructions from Moscow, pointing out that under the American-Russian agreement there was but one criterion for relief—need. Pavlov began by conceding the justice of the principle. For some minutes it looked as though he realized they were in the wrong and was trying to find a way out. Then he held up a paper and said: "There is just one difficulty, comrades. A number of those on the list supplied by the donors are under arrest. They, of course, can only be fed like other criminals."

I looked at Garin. His face was pale with anger.

"Criminals!" he cried. "You're a disgrace to the party!"

The chairman shoved some papers across the table. They were prison records purporting to prove that the arrests had been made before the food reached town.

"You know you are lying!" exclaimed Garin. "You people are running this town as though it were your private estate. You will release those men immediately and give them the food or Savelyev will have the whole pack of you in jail."

At this instant the silent little man at the door got up and came towards the table. He walked slowly, as if relishing the theatrical effect of his intervention.

"I am Tovarishch Gromov," he said, glaring at Garin. "You go back home, comrade, and tell your Savelyev that I shall attend to him as well as his princess in due time. We Stalinists are neither blind nor deaf. We know what is going on over there."

Garin, to my surprise, sat silent as if dazed by a sudden blow. It was the allusion to Irina, he told me later, that stunned him. The former aristocrats were free game for the new rulers.

After a brief pause Gromov turned to me.

"As to you, Mr. American," he said, "you may as well know that here in Alexandrovsk I am the boss." (He used the word *khozain*.) "In this town we are not going to feed counterrevolutionaries just because the Cheka didn't do enough shooting."

I looked at the chairman. His grim silence made it clear that Gromov's statement was final. The conference was over. We returned to Yekaterinoslav the same day.

We wired Moscow a detailed report. The case was appealed to Leo Kamenev, then acting Soviet Premier. A fortnight later our Moscow office wired back a favorable decision. The men under arrest were eventually released and the food justly distributed. Kamenev promised action against Gromov, but nothing was done. This sadist remained boss of the Alexandrovsk Party Executive—which meant unofficial head of the city's soviet. Stalin was already powerful enough to keep his Gromovs at their appointed tasks.

The Alexandrovsk outrage was but the first of a long series. As the Stalinist net spread over the country, sabotage and terror became rampant. They made our work ever more difficult, at times impossible.

Like all Soviet organizations, ours contained a communist cell, with Savelyev acting as chairman. Before long we had also to contend with a spy planted in our midst. Her name was Motya, her official role that of serving maid. She was a buxom, muscular brunette reputed to have been a Chekist executioner at the height of the terror in 1919.

Her methods were far from subtle, and she gave herself away completely one day by attacking Irina. The incident was a result of Irina's successful intervention on behalf of the local clergy. The whole region was in the throes of a violent antireligious campaign engineered by the Stalinists in their fight for control of the local soviet. There had been numerous arrests and the Yekaterinoslav bishop had been tried and convicted on the charge of hiding church treasures subject to confiscation. Demands appeared continually in the local press to stop all relief to "employees of the church." In desperation a committee of the clergy suggested that we give them at least the scrapings of our warehouse, if not their usual allotment of flour and canned food. Irina pleaded for the regular food allowance.

Beringer was away at the time, leaving me in complete charge.

When the weekly voucher for the clergy was presented to me I signed it and handed it over to Irina, saying she might order immediate delivery. She left the office happily, the voucher in her hand. A few minutes later I heard a violent commotion in the hallway. I rushed out just in time to see Motya lash out at the "princess" with her powerful fists. From all doors men and women rushed out to Irina's aid. They fell on the Chekist tigress, yelling, "Kill her! Get a rope!"

Savelyev had all he could do to prevent a lynching. Motya was badly mangled. When the excitement had died down, Garin told me that all that day Motya had been on the lookout for this attempt to deliver food to the priests. She was acting on instructions from Stalinists eager to provoke an incident.

"But this is not the end," Garin said. "They will now demand the arrest of Irina."

We talked to Savelyev. He offered to go with us to the chief of the Cheka—then already renamed GPU—and tell what we knew of the incident.

The GPU chief was surprisingly frank in his opposition to Stalinists.

"They are a damned nuisance," he said. "Don't worry. Your lady will not be arrested. I'm on to their tricks."

The hatred for Stalin was growing as the malice of his henchmen increased. But this state of mind was disorganized and rarely translated into concerted action. That left the Stalinists practically free to exert pressure on administrative organs. Stalin's technique, then as in later years, consisted of plotting within the cells and of simultaneous agitation in the party press.

His henchmen in Yekaterinoslav were no sooner through with the clergy than they launched a campaign against "bandits" accused of stealing brick and lumber from deserted mansions, the "future homes of proletarians." The idea behind this new venture in terror was to keep the atmosphere tense, to demonstrate to the hungry and homeless workers that the Ap-

parat was always on the alert, forever guarding their "interests."

This new Stalinist campaign was launched in the local paper with the headline "Death to the Bandits!" and a story about "robbers demolishing proletarian structures." The writer compared "the thieves of brick and lumber" with bandits attacking trains. A day later the paper's front page was filled with resolutions adopted at proletarian meetings demanding drastic action. Afterwards it was announced that the party had appointed a *troika* (trio) to deal with the criminals. It was the first official notice that the local Collegium of the party was being superseded by one made up of Stalinists exclusively. Within a week or so the paper reported that the troika had apprehended fourteen "bandits" caught stealing bricks and other materials. They were all shot in the cellar of the GPU headquarters.

Dr. Rosen, chief of our medical service, told me that four of the slain were to be taken for dissection to the university clinic. He asked me to go along with him to GPU headquarters. When we arrived, the bodies were being loaded uncovered on an open truck. I was more shocked by the callous indifference of people on the street than by the sight of the corpses. Children at play on the boulevard looked at the dead and went on playing. Their mothers seated on park benches watched the gruesome sight with the expression of people observing an everyday occurrence. A man carrying a big melon on his head walked past, casually remarking to his companion: "Freshly killed!"

At dinner that evening Dr. Rosen noticed my disinclination to eat.

"That was nothing," he said, "a drop in the bucket. You should have been here in 1919 and 1920."

And he went on to tell us about the White and Red terror. In three years the city had changed government seventeen times. Each change had brought a fresh wave of terror. When the anarchist Makhno captured Yekaterinoslav, the whole length of its main avenue was decorated with dead bodies dangling from lampposts. The troops of the White Army Commander Deni-

kin, as well as those of the Ukrainian Nationalist Petlura, perpetrated massacres. And the Bolsheviks retaliated by planting on the aristocratic street called Novodvoryanskaya a prison on one side and a slaughteryard on the other. The doctor himself had spent a fortnight in that prison under sentence of death. He got out because they were so badly in need of physicians. During his two weeks in prison he had been an eyewitness to nightly massacres. They would begin at midnight and continue for hours. One by one, the condemned would be marched over to the garden across the street. Here the executioner would order each victim to lie flat on the ground and would fire a bullet into his neck. After his release, Dr. Rosen was transferred to the local military hospital where one of his tasks was to examine carloads of Cheka victims and declare them dead. It was a gruesome ordeal. One frosty night when an exceptionally large load was brought in, he pleaded: "I know you are good shots. Why bother to have me examine them?" But the Chekist commander insisted and led him outside where three truckloads of corpses were laid out on the pavement in rows like timber. Altogether that night he examined eighty-nine bodies.

"There was no central control in those days," explained the doctor. "No checkup. Most of it was wanton murder. No one will ever know the toll of life taken during the civil war, but millions must have perished. The vast majority were innocent even of opposition. The French Revolution was child's play by comparison."

As Dr. Rosen spoke, I could see Novodvoryanskaya Street through the open window. The barbed wire was still there. The garden of murder was now a jungle of weeds. I could picture the doomed crossing that street, kneeling down, and lying prone at the executioner's feet. Again, as in Odessa, I recalled my youthful dreams of revolution, and my heart wept. The fulfillment of those dreams was a land covered with human slaughteryards.

The engineer Sokolov and his pretty wife, our guests for dinner that evening, recalled their own experience on Novodvor-

yanskaya. Sokolov's crime had been hereditary ownership of a mansion on that aristocratic street.

A few days after they took over, the Chekists arrested every former owner of an estate. Their wives and children were ordered to leave town, but many of them remained in the vicinity hoping for the release of their innocent kin. Within a week the Cheka had blocked the street with barbed wire. The prison they improvised was crowded, and executions became a nightly routine. Sokolov recalled his wakeful nights in prison when he, like everyone else, waited endlessly for a call to death. Nobody knew why he was there. Nobody was formally charged with any crime. Nobody had any idea when his turn would come. In daytime the prisoners would console one another with the hope of some miraculous escape, but after nightfall they would huddle together and simply wait for the call. Some of them sought solace in prayer; others, in feigned indifference. Many tried to forget themselves in card playing and drink—vodka was smuggled into prison by accommodating guards. The card games would go on even while the prisoners were being called to meet their fate.

It was a simple procedure devoid of formality. A Chekist would unlock the door, step in, and call a name. Someone would answer or stand up in silence. The Chekist would say: "Take your things and come along." No one in prison owned any "thing" save his clothes, an occasional pack of cards, or a bottle of vodka. Yet the word "things" mercifully accompanied every call and was the last hope of escape, for some of the summoned were being set free, others transferred. Much depended on the will and whim of the terrorist trio or its chief. The worst Chekists were fanatics above all temptation. But there were some who could be bought with gold, silver, precious stones—above all with sex, particularly if the buyer happened to have good looks and stem from the nobility. For with all their hatred of aristocrats, many of the comrades had a yen for aristocratic women.

"I escaped," said Sokolov. "I shall let my wife tell the rest."

Unblushingly, pretty Madam Sokolov told us how she had learned from a girl friend that the chief Chekist was not beyond temptation, how she came to his home to plead for her husband, how she "paid the price" and was promised his freedom on condition that the couple leave the city that very night and that no other members of the trio should see her.

"One look at you," said the chief, "and they would know why your husband is alive."

Madame Sokolov must have been a truth-teller, for she accused the Whites also of widespread murder and torture of Red prisoners of war—a crime then unheard of on Soviet territory.

"But Lenin's new policy?" someone asked, "has that not brought any change?"

"Indeed it has," Doctor Rosen replied. "Military communism had all but strangled the country. Thanks to the New Economic Policy, as it is being administered by the Rights, we may soon be on the way to recovery."

The doctor was referring to a vast change in the making. Towards the end of 1922 we in the Ukraine could see the gradual formation of three distinct groupings: the Gray mass, about eighty per cent of the people, and the two fringes—the Reds on one side, vocal and restive; and the Whites on the other, silent and vengeful. Early in the winter of that second year of famine and typhus the Stalinists began a temporary retreat. Hungry and ragged themselves, they lost hope of dominating through the party machine a hundred million peasants in revolt. Things had reached a stage where nearly all party men, including our co-workers in relief, feared to pass a village without heavily armed guards. Military communism was dead, killed not by the relatively few Whites but by masses of peasants determined on ownership of the food they toiled to produce and ready to fight the weakened regime—in some villages with arms, in others with passive resistance.

With every day it became more and more obvious to the Kremlin that the only way to avert another famine, and the consequent end of bolshevism, was to give full scope to Len-

in's New Economic Policy—the NEP. The Bolsheviks best equipped to engineer this change were the Rights or Moderates, men like Alexei Rykov, Leonid Krassin, Bukharin, Tomsy. These were in general the men who worried most about the ideals of the Revolution and regarded the harsh and antidemocratic measures of the early years as temporary and due to the danger of a capitalist counterrevolution. Now, in the general breakdown, they were coming strongly to the front, opposing Stalin's gangsterism and attempting humane and rational reforms.

Had the Western statesmen then been able to see the country's vast Gray background, the conspiracy of Stalin, and the efforts of these Moderates to oppose it, the way might have been opened for the ultimate emergence of Russia as a free land instead of a totalitarian tyranny.

The more I observed the Soviet scene in the provinces, the more I wanted to write about it for some American newspaper or syndicate. It seemed simple enough, until I began to make inquiries. Some of our relief workers who had gone back home wrote that they could not sell a single article. The papers were fed up with the famine. However, Garin came to my aid with some material that he assured me no editor could afford to miss. It was an official document marked "Secret," and it bore the Soviet emblem printed in red and gold. Underneath the emblem was the title: "Report by the Yekaterinburg Soviet to the All-Russian Central Executive Committee on the Execution of Tsar Nicholas II and his family."

"Take it, my friend," he said. "So far the government has published no more than a terse bulletin on this subject."

The paper, it appeared, was an important document. Garin was right—few editors could afford to miss it. Yet my joy was tempered with concern over my friend's safety. I dared not ask him where he got it, but I made it plain that I would rather forego the scoop than place him in jeopardy.

"Don't worry," he assured me. "I got the paper from a comrade who had been working with Byeloborodov, former chair-

man of the Yekaterinburg soviet. Take it to New York. It may come in handy."

My stay in Russia was coming to an end. Six months in a world of total misery had made me yearn for a change. I had asked to be relieved, when an unexpected visitor caused a week's delay. It was Irina who phoned from the office: "An old man wants to see you. He claims to have known you when you were a boy."

Down in the lobby I saw a gray-bearded man in rags. He was bent with age and leaned heavily on a cane. His pale, bluish face was deeply lined, but in his dark, dim eyes there lurked a glint of pride, the unquenchable pride of the Russian aristocrat.

"Volodya," he said, "don't you know me?"

I recognized his voice. The man before me was David Chatskiss, Manya's father—formerly one of the wealthiest timber men in the Ukraine. I had long since forgotten the wrong he had done me. For months I had been vainly trying to ascertain Manya's whereabouts. Now her father told me that she was in Turkey, the wife of a Soviet official in the foreign service. Through friends in Yekaterinoslav he had heard of my inquiries about the family and had come to see me. He had brought with him his youngest son, Nunya, who had fallen ill on the train.

"He is in a bad way," the old man said. "We have no doctor, no medicine."

I called our physician, and the three of us went to a hovel in the outskirts of town where we found the boy in a high fever. It was a chilly, rainy day. He lay on a wet cot under a dripping ceiling. We had to put up umbrellas to keep him dry.

The doctor diagnosed the case as typhus. He offered to take the patient to the hospital, but the father would not hear of it. In the ring of his voice, as he took issue with the physician, there was still a trace of the man's old firmness. Two daughters joined him a few days later. I provided the family with sufficient food

to keep them for the winter and remained in Yekaterinoslav until the boy was out of danger.

Towards the end of December 1922, I left for New York via Moscow, where I stopped for a few days to see a drab, dilapidated, hungry capital, unlighted at night and unheated though it was midwinter.

The Hearst papers published the official version of the execution of the Tsarist family which I brought with me, and also a series of my articles on the situation in Russia. As a result Bradford Merrill, general manager of the syndicate, and Wilkinson, its feature editor, began giving me special assignments. One of them was an interview with Bernard M. Baruch.

In the summer of 1923 nearly all Europe was trading with the Soviet Union, but as yet they had no direct business contacts with Americans. To fill the gap, Moscow decided to organize the Amtorg in New York. Khurgin, a special emissary of the Foreign Trade Commissariat, came to the U.S.A. for the purpose. The difficulties involved can be inferred from the fact that he arrived in New York as an agent of Derutra, a Soviet-German corporation. He had failed to get an entrance visa on other terms.

In fear of deportation, Khurgin decided to publish an interview explaining his American mission. On the advice of New York friends he chose as his medium the Hearst papers, which at that time, oddly enough, were exceptionally friendly to the Soviet Union. Merrill assigned me to see Khurgin and write the interview.

I found him sick in bed, running a temperature, and stubbornly determined to grant no interview unless I would show him the text and get a commitment from my editors that it would appear exactly as examined and approved by him.

"If you can manage it," he said, "we shall be deeply grateful. By 'we' I mean our Trade Commissar Krassin as well as myself.

I cannot exaggerate the importance he attaches to my work here."

When I reported all this to Wilkinson he threw up his hands. "It's all off," he said. "I dare not mention conditions to Merrill, and don't you either, unless he demands to know why you couldn't do the job."

Next day Merrill sent for me. He wanted to know what had caused the delay. I told him, and to my astonishment he agreed to Khurgin's terms.

About a week after the publication of the Khurgin story Merrill offered to send me to Russia as special correspondent. I could hardly believe my ears. Years of experience, my newspaper friends told me, were prerequisite to work abroad. Moreover, Isaac Don Levine, an expert on Russia, was already in Moscow for the Hearst papers. But Merrill insisted.

"Russia is too big for one correspondent to cover," he said. "The way things look just now we may soon have a bureau in Moscow as in other European capitals."

Khurgin was happy to hear of my assignment. He cabled the Soviet Foreign Office to expedite my visa, and in the autumn of 1923, I was on my way back to my native land.

Chapter 4



Lenin's Death and Stalin's Intrigues

I CARRIED TO MOSCOW TWO LETTERS from Khurgin, one to Trade Commissar Leonid Krassin, the other to a Soviet newspaperman who would help me get my bearings in the Red capital. Sasha was the name this man adopted later, when, as an ardent Trotskyist, he was in danger of being purged. Since he may have escaped, I shall call him only by that nickname here. Sasha was one of the most talented and best connected newsmen in Russia. Lenin and Trotsky were both fond of him. He had an inside track to the Kremlin and could on occasion penetrate the thick mists that veiled that citadel in times of stress.

With Sasha as my guide I went the rounds of Moscow, astonished by the great change that the NEP, a comparatively free economy, had wrought in a matter of nine or ten months. It was a change from a state verging on coma to a life of cheer and rapidly growing vigor. All Moscow seemed to me to be eloquent proof of the healing powers inherent in freedom. For days at a stretch I wandered over the capital, merging with the vivid scene, glowing in its colorful atmosphere and quaint charm.

The vast Sukharyev market, which had been empty and deserted during the previous winter, was now seething with buyers and sellers who crowded around stalls stacked with all kinds of merchandise. The busiest stalls of all were those selling food. They were laden with meat, poultry, game, eggs, and all kinds of fish from the Volga. The market abounded in fruit, vegetables, and dairy products brought by peasants from near-by villages and freely sold within full view of GPU officers. Trading, the mortal sin under military communism, was no longer illegal. Even the outlawed aristocrats were free to sell whatever they had managed to hide from the Cheka. Everywhere there were peasants and city people trading with gusto. The Russian air vibrated once more with music and song. Wherever a crowd gathered there would be balalaika players, singers, dancers, organ grinders with chained bears, gypsy fortune tellers. . . .

Moscow had taken on a new coat of paint. New homes were being built and old ones renovated. Stores had opened up all over town, with goods on display and no queues waiting. The streets were lighted at night, and Moscow's famous restaurants—the Ampir and the Hermitage—had reopened with excellent stage shows, gypsy choruses, and an abundance of good food and Caucasian wines. Even the big Moscow race track, the gambling casino, and the luxurious Sandunovsky baths were in full swing.

And the forty times forty gold-domed churches of the ancient metropolis were alive with singing and prayer. The great bells tolled night after night, calling the devout to worship. "It is a miracle," I heard the Muscovites say. It was, at least, a vivid proof that military communism was dead.

But gradually Sasha directed my attention to some of the shadowy aspects of the scene—many of them visible to the naked eye, others kept under cover. Already in the first year of the New Economic Policy abuses of freedom had made their appearance. Parvenus, grown rich in less than a year, were wary of government banks. They persisted in spending their big profits as fast as they made them. The inevitable result was a

sudden spurt of prostitution, gambling, and corruption among high officials, who became silent partners to unscrupulous "Nepmen," placing at their disposal scarce, state-owned raw materials.

Debauchery, wild orgies, drunken all-night parties with nudity as a feature became the vogue among the *nouveau riche*. This went on side by side with widespread unemployment and a rapidly dwindling currency that soon restricted the peasants' produce to the Nepmen or to those who during the upheaval had managed to hide their jewels in the "agrarian bank"—that is, the good earth.

About a week following my arrival Sasha offered to take me to a *vecherinka*, an evening party. But he laid down one condition. I must go as a Russian. Despite all the freedoms of the NEP, the Muscovites still feared all foreign contacts save those in the line of duty.

The party was being given by Nepman Altschuler who became a millionaire in the first year of the New Economic Policy. It was my first experience of the kind, and I was a long time getting over it.

Staging *vecherinkas* is an old Slav custom without parallel in the world. Muscovites, especially, have been known for their excesses at these all-night affairs, which can perhaps best be epitomized in the words of Sava Morozov, the Tsarist sugar king, who climaxed one of them at the swanky Hermitage with the toast: "Smash the damned place—I pay!" And Sava's vodka-happy friends proceeded to break the mirrors, the costly crystal chandeliers, the cut glass, and even the windows.

There seems to be no limit to which Russians, particularly Muscovites, would not go at these fantastic *vecherinkas*. Among "better people" they would usually begin on a high note of culture and romance, only to wind up in a riot of alcoholic fumes and unbridled passion.

On our way to this party Sasha informed me that our host was a prerevolutionary merchant, now a Nepman, who lately had been reaping big profits buying and selling secondhand mo-

tors. Before the Revolution this man had managed to convert a good deal of his capital into precious stones which he had concealed throughout the civil war and was now cashing in on. He and his beautiful mistress, the daughter of a former governor general of Petrograd, had purchased from the government a well-preserved mansion and were entertaining on a scale reminiscent of Tsarist days.

We reached the big house on Novodvoryanskaya in time to see a fine artistic program that seemed to belie everything Sasha had said about orgies. It began with a recital by the Moscow Stradivarius Quartet. This was followed by solo dances of the ballet stars Abramova, Ossya Messerer, and lesser lights. Next came soloists from the Moscow Opera, then dramatic readings by actors from the Moscow Art and Meyerhold Theaters. During the intermission a skilled master of ceremonies made the audience roar with his witty allusions to Russian celebrities in art and literature.

Shortly before midnight the program ended and the guests were ushered into a brightly lighted banquet hall. A balalaika band was playing on a balcony, and a gypsy troupe was mounting a corner platform. We sat down at tables laden with platters of caviar, wild game, suckling pigs, and many bottles of vodka and Caucasian wine.

Until two o'clock in the morning it still seemed to me that Sasha had exaggerated or that what he had said about orgies did not apply to the present company. The people around me seemed wholly engrossed in the melancholy gypsy tunes, which moved many to silent tears and not a few to open weeping. Little by little, however, as the vodka flowed, I became aware of a growing change in the atmosphere. At all tables, including our own, I could see men and women drinking *brüderschaft*—an old Slav custom, called for some unknown reason by a German name. This manner of drinking involved the twining of arms, a gazing into each other's eyes, an emptying of glasses to the last drop, and a passionate embrace. It was only a beginning. At about three o'clock, when the guests were well past mellow in-

toxication, a group of naked girls came running from a side door. The lights were dimmed. The balalaika orchestra struck up a Kamarinskaya, gayest of Russian dances. The gypsy chorus joined in. The girls ran screaming among the tables, tripping and falling into eager arms. Some of them were lifted by male dancers and hurled into the air. Others twined their arms around the necks of drunken men. More and more of the guests joined in the dancing. Tables and chairs were upset. In a very few minutes the erstwhile decorous gathering became a yelling, screaming, wildly gesticulating mob. By dawn many seemingly dignified women were completely drunk and behaving like harlots in a brothel. When Sasha and I left at about five in the morning the *vecherinka* was still in full swing.

On the way home Sasha explained that affairs like this were quite the vogue now in Moscow. In the years to come I was to see many such parties. From time to time, in a period of terror, they would be suspended, only to be resumed again as soon as things quieted down. On one occasion I saw a Nepman at the Ampir throw an American hundred dollar bill at the feet of a pretty dancer. Again as in Tsarist days, the Ampir, the Hermitage, and the Sandunovsky Baths were featuring "intimate" suites for men and women. The race tracks and the casino were crowded. In the big, glass-roofed market directly across the Red Square from the Kremlin people were openly peddling the jewels they had cached away. Along the streets well-groomed *izvozhiks* were racing along in fancy carriages.

During the previous winter these cabbies would rarely say a word to a passenger. But now they were as friendly and talkative as before the Revolution. In this sixth year of bolshevism the *izvozhiks*, like many other Russians, were still bewildered by the vast change that had come over the country. One day, while passing the Kremlin, my driver pointed his whip to two big portraits—one of Karl Marx, the other of Lenin. They hung over the Spasky gate leading to the Kremlin. "Bolshevik generals, our new rulers," he muttered.

"Do you know their names?" I asked.

"Sure," he replied, "we are learning little by little. The bearded fellow with the bushy head is Tovarishch Karl Marx. He is the chief Bolshevik of the world. And that little one with the small beard is Lenin. He is the bolshevik Tsar of Russia. The two of them live over there." He pointed his whip to the ancient palace beyond the turreted wall.

One night at the Hermitage I asked Sasha: "How long can this go on?"

My friend's reply was prophetic. "All this," he said, "is the handiwork of the Right-wing Bolsheviks. Stalin is playing with the Rights because of his fear of Trotsky. The game may go on until after Lenin's death, which is not far off. Then, if the Rights prevail, they will move towards democratic socialism. If Stalin has his way, we shall have neither communism nor capitalism, but a gang of killers and liars enthroned in the Kremlin."

During the summer, Sasha informed me, Moscow had had a number of strikes and many demonstrations against the party machine. At the head of this movement was the bolshevik leader Sapronov, who in the sixth year of the Revolution had dared to assert that proletarian dictatorship under Soviet conditions was a lie and a mockery. Far from dictating, the proletariat was being dictated to by a small group of men running the party. In his campaign against the ruling trio (Stalin, Kamenev, Zinoviev), Sapronov asserted that Soviet workers were being housed in vermin-ridden barracks and that after the day's work they were being searched for "stolen goods." In a current, widely distributed pamphlet, he accused Stalin of staging faked proletarian demonstrations in which unwilling workmen were compelled to march under threat of heavy penalties.

In the face of Lenin's imminent death and Trotsky's great popularity with the army, Stalin was laying the groundwork for a coup. As Secretary of the party, he had already managed to get hold of the GPU and the press, achieving this aim with the aid of so-called "native Bolsheviks"—many of them crafty, brutal upstarts who hated the educated party leaders with the hatred of hopeless inferiority.

Fearful of a hostile block, Stalin was trying to appease the Rights in the Politburo while at the same time playing with Zinoviev and Kamenev. The Politburo in those days met once a week.

"The other six days," said Sasha, "he has control of the party through the Apparat."

In writing my first report from Moscow, I was apprehensive of Bradford Merrill's reaction. He had banked heavily on Khurgin's letter to the Trade Commissar, confident that it would lead to an exclusive interview with him, but the Foreign Office bureaucrats were against it.

After much wrangling with the censor I finally managed to clear a general report on Russia's economy based on Krassin's views, but that was all. I came away from the Foreign Office with a feeling that my journalistic career in Russia was over. But Merrill must have understood what I was up against, for instead of firing me he had me appointed Moscow staff correspondent of the International News Service and feature writer for the Hearst syndicate. He asked me to come to New York for a brief course in staff work.

In October 1923, I was back in New York, preparing for journalistic work in Russia and worrying about my wife and our children. With all my eagerness for the job, I was determined to keep my family out of Russia until I could see clearly that the swing to the Right was more than a passing phase. Merrill and Shore, head of International News, suggested that I leave my family in Paris, and they gave me permission to visit them two or three times a year. Early in December we sailed for France, and towards the end of the month I returned to Moscow.

On my way from the Baltic station I was struck by the drastic change that had come over the capital in but a few weeks. Again, as in the previous winters, the city was immersed in gloom. Stores, shops, and restaurants were bolted and locked. Their ice-crusted windows seemed to stare at me in stern warn-

ing of peril. Although it was eleven in the morning, the streets were almost empty of traffic and there were few pedestrians.

The Sukharyev market, halfway from the station to the Savoy Hotel, was deserted. The feverish activity I had seen there in early autumn seemed to me like a dream. On Lubiansky Proyezd, a block from the Foreign Office, I heard a siren screech. The few pedestrians halted to stare in fright as a huge Black Maria came tearing down the street. At the corner of Lubianka Square this gruesome prison van made a sharp turn left and disappeared behind the gates of the headquarters of the GPU.

The Hotel Savoy, crowded during the summer, was all but deserted. Its lobby and corridors were dark, its rooms unheated. The food was unpalatable. Comrade Boyevsky, the genial manager, greeted me warmly and immediately began plying me with questions about New York and my family. When I asked him what had happened in my absence, he countered with a steady barrage of further questions. Obviously he was afraid to speak about conditions in Moscow.

That night I sleighed to Sasha through unlighted streets. Except for Lubianka and the Red Square, the whole city was plunged in darkness. Sasha did not wait for a question.

"You are back just in time," he said. "Lenin is dying. The end may come tonight, tomorrow, next week, but it cannot be long. The doctors have given up hope. The triumvirate, Stalin, Kamenev, Zinoviev, are in a panic. Hence this new wave of terror. They have practically liquidated the NEP."

My friend picked up a *Pravda*. He pointed to column after column filled with attacks on Trotsky. "This has been going on for weeks," he said. "It all started when Lyev Davidovich (Trotsky) attacked Stalin for building up an inner-party machine of secretaries. Trotsky could stop him by merely giving the signal to the military. The general staff is ready. There is very little the trio could do about it. The GPU has no army of its own—not yet! Trotsky's friends have been urging him to link up with the Rights and arrest Stalin. Muralov, commander of the Moscow garrison, is all for it. But the War Commissar

refuses to act until after Lenin's death. By that time Stalin may have maneuvered himself into the good graces of the Rights and their military friends."

That was the story as I heard it. For over two weeks I tried desperately to give New York some idea of the behind-the-curtain doings in Moscow. I sat up nights thinking up devious ways of writing a between-the-lines story that would pass the censor yet register with my editors. I failed. There was simply no way of circumventing Censor Kogan's vigilance. Other newsmen, far more experienced, had tried it and failed. Kogan, a student of the Talmud, was sharp as a knife blade and knew every trick in the game.

Rennick of The Associated Press and McKenzie of the Chicago *Daily News* told me their work in Moscow was getting more and more difficult. They both had good contact men whose background information seemed to tally with that of Sasha. They knew that Lenin's condition was grave, and they anticipated possible military action against Stalin, but like me they could cable little except quotations from the anti-Trotskyist tirades in the press and occasional handouts by the Foreign Office.

Still, word reached the outside world about Lenin's critical condition. There were rumors that he was already dead and that the Kremlin was withholding the news. Twice in one week my editors cabled requesting confirmation or denial of these rumors. But all I could get from Feodor Rothstein, head of the Press Department of the Foreign Office, was a two-word denial, "Reports unfounded."

One day Sasha informed me that Trotsky had gone for a rest to the Caucasus. "This," he said, "does not exclude the possibility of an explosion in his absence. All depends on the ability of his friends to reach an agreement with the Rights."

The news of the War Commissar's departure gave rise to conflicting rumors. Some thought that Trotsky had left on a doctor's order. Many were of the opinion that the ruling trio had persuaded him to leave in order to avert an armed rebellion by

Trotskyists both in and out of the Red Army. A third rumor had it that the Moderates on the Politburo had joined the trio in a resolution ordering Trotsky out of the capital in view of the danger of an armed demonstration that might prove the beginning of a civil war. Such a war would destroy bolshevism, and this peril, forever uppermost in the minds of all Bolsheviks, became Stalin's ultimate weapon in every major crisis. It was in the long run the key to his victory over all opposition.

From the beginning of January 1924, I was on the alert for a big story. Those were three nightmarish weeks of severe cold and appalling terror. The obvious signs of fright were the speeding, shrieking Black Marias with their pitiful human cargoes. Up Lubiansky Proyezd they sped—a short block away from my hotel. At night they would roar through the city, rousing people from sleep. In the day I could see the faces of prisoners through their slits and glimpse the horror in the eyes of men on their way to exile or death. "Who are they?" I would ask. Foreigners could only guess, and Russians were afraid to talk. Only Sasha was without fear, and he knew the answer.

"They are not Trotskyists," he said. "It would be the end of the troika if they dared arrest Trotsky's followers at this time. The victims of this wave of terror are nearly all Nepmen, who had invested their capital in reliance on existing laws, and acted in good faith. Stalin's real motive for arresting them is to create an atmosphere of fright that will tide him over the crisis that must come with Lenin's death.

"Terror and deceit have always been Stalin's chief weapons," my friend added. "Stalin always strikes down the weak. What Bolshevik, after all, would dare defend a bourgeois businessman?"

As I listened to Sasha, I could see the GPU headquarters through my window. All night long the immense building was brightly lighted and seething with activity. Like a devouring monster it seemed unable to satiate its hunger. Every little while the gates of the courtyard would swing open and close on a fresh cargo of anguish. There, in the inner recesses of this

slaughterhouse, thousands of lives were being snuffed out by a Collegium of three, who again, as in the days of civil war, were endowed with unlimited power.

"But haven't laws been adopted restraining the Cheka?" I asked Sasha.

"Nonsense," he laughed. "There can be no law with Stalin running the Apparat."

Night after night I sat at my window, watching the procession, wondering what the idealistic disciples of Marx in other parts of the world would say if they could see this death plant in operation.

The telephone roused me from sleep during the night of January 21-22. It was Kogan, the censor.

"Get up and dress," he said, "and wait for another call."

He hung up before I had time to ask him what had happened. I glanced at the clock. It was nearly one in the morning. "Which is it?" I wondered. "Lenin dead, rebellion, or both?" I ran to the window and flung it wide open. An icy blast tore into the room. All that day the thermometer had hovered around forty below zero. I looked outside and saw the sprawling city asleep under a clear, starlit sky. Here and there a late pedestrian or sleighing *izvozchik* was crunching over the frozen snow. Lubyanka Square in front of GPU headquarters was brightly lighted as usual. The rest of Moscow slumbered in a vast blackout. As far as I could see there was no movement of troops, no flash of firearms. What, then, could it be? I dressed quickly. With fur coat and cap on I sat down to wait in the now frosty room. Attempts to ring the censor were of no avail. It took Kogan half an hour to phone again. "Come on over," he said, "and bring your typewriter."

I grabbed my portable and ran the two blocks to the Foreign Office. The whole building was ablaze with lights. The square in front of the main entrance was crowded with parked cars. More were coming. In the elevator, which this time—a rare exception—was not out of order, I found German, French, Japa-

nese, and Polish newsmen. On its way up to the fifth floor the old cage became a babel of excitement, with everybody asking what had happened and none knowing the answer.

The winding corridor and small lobby of the Press Department were crowded with correspondents, their assistants, secretaries, interpreters. More were coming up the stairs. Frost-pink and breathless, they were too impatient to wait for the small, slow-moving elevator. Two questions could be heard above the din and growing confusion: "What has happened?" "Where is Kogan?" The man who had caused all this turmoil was conspicuously absent. His office, like all the other offices of the department, was vacant. There were no clerks around, no stenographers. The doors were wide open, with but one exception, that of Rothstein, chief of the department.

The censor's continued absence began to get on our nerves. Many had been roused from sleep. Some who lived far from the Foreign Office had sleighed for miles in the bitter cold. Gradually the individual complaints turned into a clamor for Kogan. The most vocal and articulate of all was Rennick of The Associated Press, who had been called away from a drinking party. He appeared on the scene scintillating from vodka and happy in anticipation of a big story. In this state Rennick went through the corridors yelling, "Kogan! Kogan! Where the hell is that damned tailor?"

Suddenly there came screams from the inner recesses of Rothstein's office. The next moment its doors burst wide open and out came the censor, wild-eyed, disheveled, yelling back at Rennick. For some moments we stood by, startled witnesses to a typical New York street brawl. The two were calling each other names and seemed on the verge of coming to blows when McKenzie, then unofficial dean of our fraternity, stepped in. He held Rennick back, while explaining to Kogan that we were all equally anxious to learn why he had called us. McKenzie's intervention had a telling effect, for Kogan calmed down quickly, mumbling: "Well, the story cannot be released now. They have just phoned the time—10:00 A.M. at the Grand Theater."

The official's nonchalant tone, more perhaps than his amazing statement, caused an indignant flare-up. In a second everybody was up and yelling: "What story? What happened? Why don't you tell us? Why the hell did you wake us up?"

For some embarrassing moments Kogan tried to evade the issue, explaining that there would be an official announcement at the Grand Theater where the Soviet Congress was in session. His explanation, far from quieting the newsmen, roused them to a higher pitch of excitement. As the clamor continued, Kogan stepped forward, waving his arms.

"All right, all right," he said. "Since I called you here on orders from above, I may as well give you the news now. Lenin is dead. He died during the evening. Be at the Grand Theater at 10:00 A.M. to hear the official announcement. There will be no release before 2:00 P.M. So I hope you people will not try any of your tricks. They won't work."

In this burlesque atmosphere the press of the world was made aware of the passing of Lenin. The grotesque incident at the Foreign Office was but a faint reflection of the panic that seized the Kremlin during the first night without the founder of bolshevism. The trio that took over was confused and scared. They feared a military uprising.

Lenin had died shortly after 8:00 P.M. Five hours later, as I learned the following day, Stalin, Kamenev, and Zinoviev were still debating the hour for the official announcement. They had before them a recommendation from Foreign Commissar Chicherin, urging an immediate release. Acting on Chicherin's instructions, Kogan telephoned the reporters to be ready. At 1:30 in the morning Stalin had agreed to Chicherin's recommendation but had changed his mind while the correspondents were on their way to the Foreign Office.

The night was nearly gone when I left the Press Department. Out in the biting cold I felt wide awake. A big day was ahead of me. A novice in the news game, I was about to handle a tre-

mendous story. My immediate problem was to steer clear of a crushing beat by highly specialized competitors.

The first thing to do was to find some adequate conveyance. Rennick of the AP, I knew, had friends at the British Embassy. They had helped him with cars before and were certain to do so this time. My competitor of the United Press enjoyed a still greater advantage. A contract between the United Press and Tass, the Russian official news agency, gave him first claim on all Soviet news. He was also privileged to make use of the Tass wires in flashing bulletins. The more I thought over the situation, the more it seemed to me like a race between the AP and UP, with INS running a poor third simply because poor judgment had been used in sending me to Moscow.

One thing I did know, however: to have any kind of a chance, I must get a car quickly. But where? There were none for hire. As yet I knew no one in the embassies. Sasha had told me previously that all cars in Moscow belonged to Soviet institutions. For the time being they could not be used privately—not even by high officials. “A blind alley!” I said to myself, walking disconsolately across Theater Square where gangs of workmen were hacking away at the frozen snow, clearing paths for the morning session of the All-Russian Executive at the Grand Theater.

For some time I wandered through the streets, trying to think of a way out. The words “blind alley” echoed in my mind. Then, in a flash, I recalled the alley that cut across part of the distance from the Foreign Office to the telegraph office. The alley was too narrow for automobiles but wide enough for a sleigh. The thing to do was to get a fast horse! During the summer the city had been full of racers for hire. Some of them, I recalled, were still to be found at the railway stations. At the corner of Tverskaya, I hopped on a passing sleigh. “Alexandrov station!” I told the driver. From boyhood I had loved horses and could tell a good one at sight.

Among the many skeletonlike nags on the Alexandrovsky Square, I spotted a gray racer, a magnificent, restless, snorting

beast—a joy to behold. And he chimed beautifully with his gigantic, hoary-bearded, fur-wrapped driver, a vivid reminder of ancient Moscow. At my approach the man picked up the reins. “Where to, sir?”

“To the telegraph office!”

He was off in a flash, dashing over the crisp snow at a breath-taking clip. As we passed the Foreign Office, I glanced at my watch and ordered the man to take the route through the alley. A block up Lubiansky Proyezd the driver swung to the right, clicked his tongue, and cleared the zigzaggy passage in a little over two minutes. A minute later he pulled up in front of the telegraph office. To get there by car my competitors would have to drive up Lubiansky Proyezd as far as the boulevard and then turn right—a distance they could hardly cover in less than ten minutes. I hired that gray horse and driver by the day, went up to my room, and fell into a sound sleep.

At ten in the morning I was at the Grand Theater. An usher led me to a musician’s seat in front of the stage. The space reserved for the orchestra had been given over to the press. There, in the big pit, we foreigners were astonished to learn that Lenin’s death was still an official and, as it seemed to us, actual secret. There were no Soviet newspapers that morning. The presses had all been stopped during the night. If any of the Russian reporters were in on the secret they exhibited rare talent in acting dumb.

Shortly after ten the triumvirate, Stalin, Kamenev, and Zinoviev, appeared in the wings and moved towards the footlights, followed by all of the People’s Commissars except Trotsky. With the exception of Stalin, every one of the leaders looked pale and haggard. It was obvious that they had passed a sleepless night.

For some moments Lenin’s heirs stood silent, facing a hushed audience. Then Kalinin, President of the Republic, stepped forward to make the announcement. In rasping tones devoid of any trace of emotion the goateed little Bolshevik told the audience that Lenin had died the night before. He gave the exact mo-

ment, dropped some banal remark about the passing of a great leader, and ended by saying that the funeral details would be announced in the press. He then stepped back, leaving before him a deep void. Nobody stirred. Only scattered coughing could be heard from the rear of the pit. At that moment an orchestra struck up the first strains of Chopin's funeral march. All at once the tension gave way to an outburst of grief. From every corner of the auditorium came wailing and groans. Gigantic, bearded Russians cried like children. The hysteria rose steadily, merging with the weeping trumpets, then surmounting them until they sounded faint and distant as if coming from a storm at sea. As I watched the people swaying and crying in an ever mounting tide of mass hysteria, it seemed to me at moments as though the walls of the theater swayed and wept with them.

I turned back to the stage. There before me stood Russia's rulers, crying like the people they ruled. Zinoviev was hysterical. Kamenev, Dzerzhinsky, and Rykov wept without restraint, big tears coursing down their deep-lined faces and wetting their beards. Everybody wept, with one exception—Stalin. He alone stood dry-eyed, calm, steely, as composed in manner as he had always appeared at parades. I watched him closely. He was dressed in his familiar attire—a military tunic buttoned at the neck, a pair of black boots, an old soldier's overcoat.

The more the audience wept, the greater seemed Stalin's determination to retain his pose of strength, of a man unmovable by grief, pain, pity, or death itself. Then suddenly he looked down at the newsmen in front of him and, as if embarrassed by their concerted gaze, shifted from foot to foot, dug into his coat pocket, pulled out a handkerchief, and raised it to his eyes. As the weeping continued, Stalin seemed to become annoyed by this sudden impulse to conform, for he pocketed his handkerchief as quickly as he had pulled it out, raised his head, and again stared into space—meditative, dry-eyed, completely calm.

Thus the Man of Steel appeared before the Soviet Congress on that fateful day when he was about to step into Lenin's shoes. The striking contrast between Stalin's behavior and that of his

colleagues seemed to register with the onlookers. It occurred to me at the moment that those people, weeping over Lenin's death, might well be mourning their fate at the hands of this dreadful man now let loose on a martyred land.

The session in the theater was over in half an hour. There remained over three hours before the release time on the stories to be written.

At 1:30 P.M. I was at the Foreign Office with my story, waiting for the censor. We all came early, each correspondent keen on scoring a beat, each hoping to have his copy signed ahead of the rest.

Half an hour later Kogan stepped into the lobby and began to initial cables without reading them. It never happened before and never has since.

He began with the news agencies. First he cleared the UP story, the INS second, the AP third. As the three of us raced down the corridor, I saw the UP man dash through a door marked "Tass." There he could file his report ahead of all others. For the rest the race was on. I ran down the five flights with Rennick in hot pursuit. Outside, while sprinting across the street, I saw my AP colleague smile as he looked at my sleigh.

The street was crowded with cars flying ambassadorial flags—English, German, Japanese, French—all waiting for correspondents. Only one of them, Rennick's, was of interest to me. It had no sooner started than my driver lashed out. We were off in a flash, racing the limousine as far as the alley. There we swung off to the right, cleared the alley in less than two minutes, and in another minute pulled up at the telegraph office. Not a car was in sight. I dashed up the stairs and into the vestibule. There was no one at the cable window. The girl on duty smiled. "Lucky man," she said as she took my cables.

The operator had already sent my "flash" and was starting on my detailed story when Rennick appeared in the doorway, followed by McKenzie of the Chicago *Daily News*, and others. I stepped aside and watched them form in line.

The telegraph office soon became crowded with excited Russians. They had heard rumors of Lenin's death and wanted confirmation. Militiamen arrived to handle the rapidly growing crowd. On my way out I heard a commotion, and I turned to see McKenzie at grips with Rennick. "None of your damned poker tricks," McKenzie was yelling. The militia intervened. Rennick, it appeared, was trying to hold up the line by sending private wires. The telegraph manager ordered the girl to handle press work only.

In the evening a cable from New York informed me that the INS "beat the world" on graphic details and made front pages on both sides of the ocean. In reward I was placed in charge of the Universal News in addition to INS.

That first report on Lenin's death was but a prelude to a tremendous story—an unparalleled funeral pageant staged against a background of suppressed revolt.

Anti-Soviet news factories abroad were busy churning out stories on "battles for the possession of the Kremlin." This torrent of fiction, as well as the censor's vigilance, helped to befog the real perils facing Stalin at the time. Throughout that crucial week he and his scheming partners were completely at the mercy of Trotsky's General Staff (the Military Revolutionary Soviet). For thirty-six hours they did not dare bring Lenin's body from his home in Gorki to Moscow, fearing that the insistence of the High Command on a military funeral was a ruse, that Trotsky's Red Army was preparing to seize power. All Stalin could place in the field against them was a host of intriguing, cowardly Apparatchiks, who would most likely run to cover at the first sign of a showdown.

On the day of the announcement of Lenin's death there were persistent rumors that Muralov, the seven-foot commander of the Moscow garrison, was demanding the arrest of Stalin and all his henchmen. Muralov and his military group, it was said, were ready to act without word from Trotsky, who they knew was opposed to any overt act against the Communist Party.

On his side Stalin was frantically trying to form a liaison with the Rights, who were resentful of his recent pogrom against the Nepmen and were inclined to meet the Trotskyists halfway.

The morning after Lenin's death the political line-up in the Kremlin consisted of two well-defined wings flanking a shifty opportunist center. On the right were the Moderates, who from the very beginning of the bolshevik upheaval had been consistently opposed to extreme measures and had fought every attempt to turn Russia into an armed camp of world revolution. On the left were the Trotskyists, no longer adherents of military communism, preparing after the dreadful famine to compromise temporarily with capitalism at home and abroad but fanatically adhering to Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution," which meant that Russia must remain the center of organized world revolt.

Between the two wings was the Stalinist center. Like Trotsky and the Rights, Stalin had his own pet theory. It was "socialism in one country," which few Russians believed feasible and many regarded as a mere pretext to screen a deeply laid plot for ultimate control of the ruling party.

Lenin's death was followed by a number of conferences at which the leaders of the Right and the Left tried vainly to come to an understanding on the fundamentals that had separated them for years. Had they been able to foresee at the moment their fate at the hands of a triumphant Georgian dictator, they would probably have agreed with the levelheaded commander, Muralov, that the real issue was not this or that pet theory but a deadly menace to be dealt with by immediate action. But like Trotsky, who during these crucial days remained absent from the capital, the conferees feared that any overt act against the Apparatus might rouse the latent forces of counterrevolution—a fear which Stalin exploited with consummate skill.

From the moment of Lenin's death, Stalin was feverishly at work, intriguing behind the scenes. To some observers of these hectic activities at the Kremlin it looked like an all-out scramble for power. Unfortunately, this was true of but one faction—

the Stalinists. The Trotskyists chose these fateful hours to try and settle some of their old theoretic disputes. The Rights on the other hand were bent on checking Trotsky's extreme internationalism and bringing to full fruition Lenin's New Economic Policy. They advocated a Soviet Magna Charta, which was to guarantee the abolition of terror, the secret ballot, juridical safeguards against arbitrary arrest, termination of administrative punishments, freedom of speech and press, full restoration of light industry and commerce in both urban and rural Russia, abolition of the government monopoly of foreign trade, scrapping of the Third International, and public disavowal of Trotsky's theory of world revolution. This group argued that as long as Russia remained a center of international revolt it could never hope to come to terms with the West, whose credits, trade, and good will were conditions essential to Soviet recovery and progress.

The Trotskyists, eager for the restoration of the Soviet economy, were willing to go far in meeting the demands of these Moderates, but they balked at discarding the Third International as well as Trotsky's pet theory of permanent revolution. Thus they left the field open to Stalin. With tireless energy and the soft touch of a master mechanic, he proceeded to exploit his great opportunity. He appeased the Rights by ostensibly yielding to their demands. Above all, he conceded them full control of the government and supported them in electing their leader Alexei Rykov as Premier to fill the vacancy left by Lenin's death. Stalin assured them that henceforth they were free to govern Russia as they saw fit. If they deemed the situation ripe for the reforms they had in mind, they could go ahead. If, on the other hand, full responsibility should make them see the wisdom of a more gradual progress, they were the ones to decide. All he wanted was to keep the ruling party strong and free from any rift which might involve the peril of a "second civil war." Rykov and his followers, although they had misgivings, took these pledges and promises at their face value. Even when Stalin began gradually to violate them, making his insin-

cerity more and more evident, they kept on hoping that in the end he would keep the faith. Thus, in spite of continuous friction, Stalin was able to avoid a frontal collision for years.

After lining up the Rights on his side, Stalin proceeded with his plans for a funeral unprecedented in history. Unable to prevent a military demonstration, he relied on the influence of the Rights with keymen in the High Command to hold the army in check.

Throughout the night following the announcement of Lenin's death I was kept awake by alarming queries from our offices in New York, London, Paris, and Berlin. The rumors of a revolt in Russia persisted. They were denied without comment at the Foreign Office, but Sasha kept me posted on the goings-on at the Kremlin. Aware of the new Right-Center line-up, my Trotskyist friend prayed for a spontaneous rebellion. A mere incident, he felt, might bring an explosion.

Hope for an upheaval was nourished by the military aspect of the scene. On the day following the official announcement of Lenin's death, Moscow became an armed camp. Early that morning I was awakened by the din of an army on the move. Before I had time to dress, the city was filled with the noise. From an upper window of the Savoy Hotel I could see vast columns marching to the center from the capital's wide-flung suburbs.

I sleighed to the railway station through streets lined on both sides with solid ranks of infantry. The lines stretched along the entire three-mile route from the railway terminal to the House of Columns, where the body was to lie in state. Again, as on the previous day, the thermometer hovered around forty degrees below zero. To keep warm the soldiers stacked their rifles, piled up logs, and lighted big fires. Along this route of flame and smoke Lenin's disciples bore the spare red coffin from the railway station to the marble-columned hall. There for three days and three nights Lenin lay as if asleep on a mound of flowers. Millions filed by him for a parting glance. Day and night they moved through the hall to the strains of funereal music.

On the third day of mourning, Lenin's closest co-workers lifted the casket from its bier and bore it on their shoulders through the ancient gate, past the famous Iberian Virgin where Lenin had put up the Marxian motto: "Religion is the opium of the people."

A deep, icy calm hung over the Red Square as they placed the coffin on a wooden structure that was later to give place to a red marble tomb. The cold was so intense that bands could not play nor could rifles be shot. Only the bells of the ancient cathedrals tolled out their old, soul-stirring tunes as the parading masses, hoary with frost, moved by, dipping their banners in a last salute to Lenin. All day long the masses moved past the bier in a seemingly endless stream of bowed heads and black-draped scarlet banners. In the twilight of the oncoming night they lifted the coffin from the catafalque and carried it to the vault beneath.

The clouds scattered shortly after nightfall, and under a clear, starlit sky a patrol of heavily furred guards mounted watch over the newly hallowed ground.

Interviews with Rykov and Trotsky

SOME TIME AFTER LENIN'S FUNERAL the old gypsy cabaret Podval was reopened. There, one night, I saw a Russian raise his glass of vodka and exclaim: "To Alexei Ivanovich Rykov—we toast him in his favorite drink—Rykovka! At last we have a true Russian in the Kremlin!"

The toast drew spontaneous applause. From every corner of the room came cheers: "Hurrah!" "Bravo!" A Russian at a neighboring table explained to me the meaning of "rykovka."

"It's a new name for vodka," he said. "Rykov loves vodka. He is one of us. With him at the Kremlin we have little to fear."

The incident at the Podval was characteristic of a prevailing mood. Before the winter was over, there were many signs of a vast change in the making. In a few months the government succeeded in stabilizing the Soviet currency. It was the first of many reforms aimed at alleviating the effects of Stalin's recent venture in terror. There was a sudden abatement in mass arrests. The screaming Black Marias vanished from the streets of the capital. Prisoners, long unheard from, returned home. Trotsky was back at the War Commissariat. His return marked an end to all rumors of revolt.

Without any fanfare, and with but few decrees, the Rights or Moderates, acting as the government, had succeeded in allaying fear. There was something new in the air. Moscow brightened and began to pulse with its customary vigor. Private shops, stores, and restaurants reopened all over town. Foreigners were amazed by the scale and pace of the change, and the Russians were quick to welcome it with toasts to Lenin's successor, who had fought extreme measures from the earliest days.

The enmity between Stalin and Trotsky had given the Rights a balance of power which Rykov exploited with astonishing skill. By the end of the winter many of the idle Soviet factories were working overtime and absorbing large numbers of the unemployed. Before long both the government and private industry were supplying the peasants with badly needed essentials. Again, as during the previous summer, Moscow was filled with smiling faces. Freedom was in the air, and the people, though still badly dressed and poorly housed, behaved as if the country had just thrown off the yoke of a cruel invader.

A bright, heartwarming feature of the change was its ethical aspect. Equality and decency for all became a concrete rule instead of a distant goal. Men in power, from the highest down to the lowest, were making an earnest effort to reconcile their mode of living with that of the people. The new Premier, who had a long prison record, set an example by living on a scale not much above that of the average citizen. Even the use of automobiles by officials was so restricted as to convince people that the Soviet leaders were workers like themselves. To take a minor example, Rykov, as Premier, adopted the custom of riding alongside his chauffeur. His example was followed by all ranks of officials in or out of the Kremlin.

Simplicity, decency, and absence of ceremony characterized the army as well as the civilian branches of government. The officers dressed no better than plain soldiers, ate the same food as their subordinates, and shared their quarters. Only married commanders were entitled to private dwellings. There were no gilded, Tsarist epaulets in those days, no brass or braid, no ex-

alted ranks like general, marshal, or any of the other reminders of a hated past. The title "commander" applied to all ranks regardless of the units commanded. Small badges or stripes marked the various grades of service, and a spirit of true comradeship permeated every branch of the armed forces. The word "tovarishch" rang true again as on the first day of the Revolution. The minimum party wage applied to all Bolsheviks regardless of rank. Only non-party specialists were entitled to higher pay.

Pleasure, like food, was equally shared by all people in and out of the party. Night after night the Moscow theaters were crowded with workers, peasants, soldiers, and civil service employees for whom tickets had been made available at nominal prices.

The only cars parked in front of amusement places were those bearing ambassadorial flags. Commissars, like all other Soviet leaders, followed Rykov's example in coming to the theater on foot. Everything was being done to wipe out privilege, to cultivate among the people a sense of unfeigned social equality, to encourage a vivid realization that the pleasures as well as the hardships were being shared by all. With a minimum of propaganda and a maximum of action, the idealists in power gave evidence of their faith that the state as organized at present was but a passing phase, a temporary device to help in the attainment of the great goal—a classless society.

How beautiful Moscow looked that spring! Towards the end of April the city's budding parks were crowded with promenaders and children at play. On Easter Eve, Moscow's "forty times forty" churches once more tolled their silvery bells, summoning worshipers to prayer. Early Saturday evening, when the golden cupolas of the Cathedral of Our Savior still mirrored the rays of the setting sun, priests bearing icons and accompanied by a chanting choir came down the wide marble terrace, followed by thousands of worshipers. They thrice circled the immense edifice in solemn procession reminiscent of ancient times. When the ceremony was over, men, women, and chil-

dren embraced and kissed, repeating the sacred words: "Christ has risen! In truth he has risen!" No one who had lived through the days when religious processions in Russia were broken up, and in some places machine-gunned, could witness this scene unmoved.

Still, some people had misgivings. As yet no word had issued from the Kremlin about the widely rumored Soviet Constitution that was to end dictatorship, guarantee personal freedom, and dissolve the one-party monopoly of power. Though free and unafraid for the present, skeptics were doubtful about the future. "How long will it last?" was a question often asked and never answered.

During those hopeful winter months very little was heard either of Stalin or of Trotsky. But shortly after Easter a series of alarming rumors shook the capital. The most persistent was to the effect that Lenin's testament had demanded the removal of Stalin as Secretary of the Communist Party. That testament, people averred, was sacred. To ignore it seemed convincing proof that Stalin, despite his yielding to the Moderates, was all-powerful in the inner councils of the party.

In support of this argument some competent observers stressed the appointment of Frunze, a known Stalinist, as Vice-Commissar of War. Of far greater significance was a decision by the Politburo to check every order of War Commissar Trotsky, no matter how routine. Obviously, the intriguing trio—Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev—were still active behind the scenes. But to what extent? That question remained unanswered for some time.

By chance I got a behind-the-scene glimpse of the real political setup. I was just about to set out for a visit to my family in France when Bradford Merrill cabled me instructions to interview Trotsky. Rothstein, head of the Soviet Press Department, dismissed the request abruptly. Such an interview, he warned, might imperil my chances of obtaining a return visa to Russia.

Ignoring the warning, I asked Sasha to make the appointment. He did it on one condition: I was to refrain from any questions

concerning the Apparatus. Anything connected with Stalin's secretariat must be avoided because the relations between the War Commissar and the Secretary of the party were growing worse daily.

At the War Office on Znamyanka I found Trotsky cheerful and seemingly in good health. Much to my surprise he ignored Sasha's condition to steer clear of party issues. In answer to my first question, what he thought of the prospects of NEP, Trotsky attacked the triumvirate, charging them with numerous attempts to liquidate Lenin's New Economic Policy. At the same time he praised Rykov for his devotion to Leninism in economic matters. He stressed the word "economic," adding, off the record, that he and the Premier did not see eye to eye on foreign policy. Reverting to NEP, Trotsky said: "The New Economic Policy may have saved the Revolution. It surely prevented a second, perhaps a fatal, famine." Trotsky then switched from NEP to the question of granting foreign concessions, stressing its importance to Russia's industry. He compared the Soviet industrial task with that of the United States during the World War, saying: "What we need here is an organizer like Bernard M. Baruch."

Trotsky's keen interest in this topic seemed to me, at the moment, a convenient way of evading further talk about the troika. I learned later that at the time of our talk the War Commissar already knew of his eventual demotion and appointment to the humble office of chairman of the Commission on Foreign Concessions.

My interview with Trotsky took place in the early evening, and it was only in parting that he informed me he would have to read my copy before I could send it to New York. He rang for his secretary, who offered to call for the copy at the Hotel Savoy, where I was stopping, and return it later in the evening. We arranged that everything, including the censor's OK, should be ready by midnight, Moscow time.

Trotsky's secretary called for my copy at nine o'clock but failed to return an hour later as agreed. I waited for him until

midnight, when New York came through with an urgent query. For two hours I tried vainly to contact Trotsky. There was no way of reaching him. Sasha, too, had vanished. Finally I called at the War Office.

After many excuses Trotsky's secretary told me the interview was being held up by the party censor. It was the first time I ever heard of a censor outside and above the one at the Foreign Office. Seeming eager to help me, the secretary promised to bring the copy shortly. Then he, too, vanished, and I was left hanging in the air between the mysterious censor at the Kremlin and my anxious editors.

A stranger telephoned at four in the morning. He demanded to know whether I was *Grazhdanin* (Citizen) Reswick.

"Your interview with Comrade Trotsky," said the voice, "had to be translated into Russian. You will find it at Chicherin's secretariat."

At the Foreign Office, Chicherin's chief assistant handed me two pages typed in Russian. They were the mangled remains of my story, a mere ghost of the original.

Chicherin, the kindhearted Foreign Commissar, was still at his desk. I showed him the copy. Dead tired after a night's toil, he glanced at the poorly typed pages and mumbled: "You ought to be glad they left you anything at all to cable. It could have been worse."

Out in the typist's room, while translating the Russian back into English, Chicherin's secretary informed me that the party censor had telephoned to the Foreign Commissar earlier.

"Comrade Chicherin," he said, "barely managed to save you these two pages."

This experience at the War Office was my first evidence that the Stalin-Trotsky fight was on again.

The interview filed, I was free to take my leave, and after a few hours sleep I got busy packing. Sasha showed up at the station, where he informed me that Trotsky was distressed over the incident. As the train moved away, I saw tears in my friend's eyes.

"Good-by, Volodya," he called after me. "God knows whether we shall ever meet again."

I rejoined my family in Nice. In a short time they had all managed to learn French. Joe, the youngest, who had been ill during the winter, had fully recovered. Murray and Helen were enrolled in the excellent *Lycée Henri Quatre* in Paris, where they would all move soon. I stayed with them a month and then started back to Moscow via Berlin, where the Soviet Foreign Office had promised to send my return visa.

It was impossible to get a visa in advance. This device was calculated to force a foreign correspondent to be silent while abroad. Uncensored writing or even free talk might mean denial of re-entry. In this, as in many other matters, the GPU had the last word.

In Paris I obtained a German transit visa, intending to stop in Berlin between trains, have the Soviet visa stamped on my passport, and proceed to Moscow. But "God proposes," they say in Russia, "and the GPU disposes." At the Soviet Embassy in Berlin, Counselor Yakubovich had two wires from Moscow. One of them authorized my re-entry. The other refused it.

"Whatever could have made the Foreign Office change their minds?" I asked.

"They didn't," explained Yakubovich, who knew me from Moscow. "The second wire is signed by the GPU."

Yakubovich knew all about my interview with Trotsky, Trotskyists at the Foreign Office having kept him informed. The GPU, they advised him, was determined to keep me out of the country. Thus, my journalistic work in Russia had come to an end—Yakubovich made this plain with a tone of finality.

"In all my experience," he said, "I have never heard of a successful appeal against the GPU."

I went to the Adlon Hotel and cabled New York, quoting Yakubovich. The reply was a two-months' advance of salary, with instructions to remain in Berlin and fight it out. Merrill was resentful of the GPU's action. He cabled:

"Appeal to the Rights. Let us see whether our enthusiasm over their government was justified."

The cable gave me a cue. I wired Premier Rykov about the Trotsky interview and mentioned Trade Commissar Krassin as reference. A day later Yakubovich telephoned:

"I can hardly believe it, but they wired your visa on Comrade Rykov's personal order."

At the Soviet Embassy, Ambassador Krestinsky stared at me through his thick lenses. "It is a case without parallel," he said.

In Moscow, Rothstein, member of the Foreign Office Collegium and chief of the Press Department, confirmed that the trouble about my visa had been caused by the Trotsky interview.

"I warned you," he said, smiling. "But the way things have turned out it was worth the trouble. Premier Rykov was aroused over the incident, and to show his displeasure he has offered to give you an exclusive interview on conditions in the Soviet."

Rothstein telephoned to the Kremlin and made the appointment for that same afternoon.

At the Kremlin gate, Nyesterov, the Premier's genial secretary, was waiting for me, "to save time," as he explained, "in passing the guards." Nyesterov was a young Red Army officer, recently mustered out for service in the Kremlin. Tall and neat in his white summer uniform, he led the way to the palace. It was my first visit to the Kremlin, and I was eager to see its historic sights. For the moment, however, my interest focused on the fantastic, almost unbelievable, spectacle of an adjutant to the head of a government having trouble getting into the government buildings. Four sentry posts, manned by heavily armed guards in GPU uniform, blocked our way from the outer gate to the inner recesses of the Kremlin. At each barrier the soldiers refused us passage until they had telephoned their superiors. While waiting, my escort blushed like a schoolgirl, explaining that the trouble was not with my credentials but with his own. His photograph, it appeared, was taken when he had on his winter uniform and cap. Now he was bareheaded and dressed in

summer garb. This made the guards skeptical of his identity. Some of them went so far as to make him turn his face so they could see his profile, an order which he duly obeyed. They stared at his right cheek, made him turn the left, shrugged their shoulders, and invariably ended up by phoning the commander. After passing the last post Nyesterov informed me that every resident of the Kremlin, including even Rykov and Stalin, had to show their credentials "for their own protection." The reason he gave for this was that some make-up men in Moscow theaters were so clever they could disguise a would-be assassin to look like any member of the Politburo.

On our way down a vaulted corridor I asked my escort whether there was any danger of a terrorist attack.

"Look at this long corridor," he replied. "There isn't a soul in sight. One cannot be too careful."

At the end of the corridor he opened a door and stepped aside to let me pass. The door closed behind me and I found myself in a small, white, vaulted room with Lenin's picture on a wall opposite the entrance. Underneath the picture was a plain oak table loaded with papers and books. There were only two chairs. In these almost rustic surroundings I met Premier Rykov for the first time. He was a ruddy, brown-bearded man, medium-sized, dressed in a black leather jacket and dusty boots. A typical great Russian, I always thought, with laughter, yet melancholy, in his gray eyes. His deep-lined face bore the indelible marks of long years in prison and exile. Yet, it was a kindly face; there was no bitterness. He was one of those hearty, openhanded Russians who never seem to be strangers and have no difficulty in making friends.

After a vigorous handshake Rykov pointed to a chair, offered me a cigarette, and lighted one himself. He inhaled deeply. "This is my workroom," he said. "It is small, but I like it. After living so long in a prison cell I find it difficult to work in large rooms."

I thanked him for his intervention in my visa difficulties.

"I know by experience the bitter taste of injustice," he re-

marked, and then he proceeded to state his views on conditions in the Soviet Union. He talked, with few questions from me, for a little over an hour. The principal achievement of his regime, he believed, was to make sure that those who govern have no greater privileges than those they govern. "For the time being," he said, "this means equality of poverty. But poverty, after all, is better than hunger and pestilence. These were our lot only two years ago. Now the worst is over and we can look ahead to better times."

I recall the quiet candor with which the Premier acknowledged the terrible difficulties of the situation and the firm note of hope and determination. Smiling, he picked up a newly bound volume. It was a detailed report on Russia's immense natural resources. "We have to resolve this paradox," he said, "that Russia, potentially the richest country in the world, is actually the poorest."

Rykov felt that further Soviet progress depended on peace in the world, on foreign credits, and on the full development of Lenin's New Economic Policy. "Our survival," he said, "may well depend on the full development of this policy."

Chapter 6

A Volga Tour with Rykov and Yagoda

ABOUT A MONTH FOLLOWING my return to Moscow the Soviet Premier invited three American correspondents, Walter Duranty, William Henry Chamberlin, and myself, to accompany him on a tour of the Volga regions. Duranty could not come because of illness. It took me nearly a week to find a substitute to do my work in Moscow. The Premier's party had left meanwhile. I joined them at Saratov. Chamberlin came a day or two later.

A week on the Volga had made Rykov look more robust than when I saw him in the Kremlin. He was relaxed and was evidently enjoying a much needed rest. There was a gleam of cheer in his eye as he welcomed me aboard the Soviet yacht—formerly a pleasure craft of the royal family. At the gangplank he introduced me to his entourage—his two secretaries, Nyesterov and Mrs. Nyesterov, Gorbunov, Secretary of the Council of People's Commissars, Svidersky, Vice-Commissar of Education, Michael Koltsov, a well-known Soviet journalist—and “Comrade Yagoda,” as the Premier said simply, omitting to specify his place and title.

A spare, slightly tanned, trim-looking youngish officer stepped forward, smiling. As we shook hands, I wondered: "Can it be the famous Chekist?" It was difficult to associate terror with this affable and modest person. Indeed, his smile and friendly greeting were so disarming that I felt sure he must be some other Yagoda. But Koltsov, as though answering my doubts, remarked:

"Comrade Yagoda, did it ever occur to you that without horns you simply don't look your part?"

They all, including the "comrade" himself, burst out laughing, and I realized that before me was the dreaded Vice-Commissar of the GPU, at the mention of whose name many Russians made the sign of the cross.

Someone suggested a group photograph. "I had better step aside," said Yagoda. But Koltsov insisted: "Now, Genrikh, none of your damned modesty."

At that moment I heard a camera click, and instantly Yagoda was in action.

"Hand me that plate!" he commanded, glaring at the photographer. The man obeyed without a word. Yagoda smashed the glass against the railing, explaining to Rykov that a snapshot in his company "might embarrass our guest with the American Intelligence."

There followed an awkward pause, which Koltsov dispelled with his ever-ready wit.

"Don't you know, Genrikh, that the American Intelligence is too busy enforcing prohibition to bother with newspaper correspondents?"

We all laughed as Yagoda stepped aside and watched the rest of us pose for the picture.

The luncheon bell rang, and we proceeded to a spacious dining room which still bore traces of Tsarist grandeur. At the table I found myself seated between the Premier and Yagoda, both of whom took pains to put me at ease.

The Premier was in a jubilant mood. Saratov, his birthplace, was staging a reception for him. From early morning the city

had been in an uproar, with bands blaring and singing columns on the march. People were pouring in from military camps and near-by towns and villages.

The reception committee, representing the local soviet, came aboard and joined us at the table. While they were chatting with Rykov, Yagoda confided to me that he was having a hard time guarding the Premier.

"I'm charged with his safety," he complained, "but he won't let me guard him. He simply refuses to be protected. This aversion goes back to the time when he was a Tsarist prisoner."

Yagoda's immediate problem was to carry out the security measures imperative during a parade and an open-air mass meeting. Half a million people were expected on the city's main square. Rykov was to speak from a platform erected on the spot where in 1912 he had been almost beaten to death during a May Day demonstration. There were still a number of former White Guards in the city, and Yagoda had a list of them. But the Premier absolutely forbade preventive arrests or any other precautionary measures.

On deck after lunch I witnessed a minor clash between the two men. A regiment of infantry was lined up on either side of the avenue, running from the Volga to the center of town. Other formations were on their way to extend the lines. Rykov no sooner noticed the maneuver than he turned fiercely to Yagoda. "What's this?" he demanded. "Who did it?"

Yagoda tried to explain that everything was being done in the interest of his personal safety.

"Nonsense!" yelled Rykov. "Dismiss the troops at once! I'll have none of this Tsarist grandeur."

The order was promptly obeyed. A few minutes later I saw the Premier smiling as he bent over the rails, watching Red boy scouts and girls line up on the avenue in place of the soldiers.

When the cars arrived to take the Premier to the meeting, the boat became so crowded that I had to hold on to his secretary to make sure of a place in the procession. Rykov, already in his car, noticed our absence and sent word for us to join him.

Through cheering lanes we proceeded to the center of the city—Yagoda, Svidersky, Gorbunov, and Koltsov following in the car behind, with a long procession following them.

The ovation for the Commissar-in-Chief grew steadily as we advanced towards the center. It reached a climax as we approached the main square. Here some of the escorting comrades left their cars, hoisted Rykov in the air, and carried him on their shoulders through a roaring crowd. In the midst of this tremendous ovation, the Premier turned back, pointing to our stalled car. In a moment Nyesterov and I were also in the air, swaying on shoulders above the cheering people. I looked back and saw Yagoda and his party yanked out of their seats, too, and borne aloft to the platform.

When the cheering finally died down, Rykov addressed the crowd. He began by recalling the day when Tsarist Cossacks had beaten him within an inch of his life for staging a May Day demonstration on that very square. As he went into details of the terrible incident, his slight stammer became more pronounced.

"You hear me stammer," he said. "It is a hang-over from that beating. None of our comrades escaped that day. These very stones ran red with our blood. In those days we dreamed of a Russia redeemed from the blight of Tsarism. That dream is fulfilled. But to destroy absolutism was only part of our task. Our aim today is to build a truly free, socialist Russia."

The immense square resounded with spontaneous applause and prolonged cheers. It was one of the very few unregimented demonstrations I ever witnessed in Soviet Russia.

That night Rykov entertained a company of the local comrades whom he had known in his childhood and youth. It was nearly midnight when the last of the worker-peasant delegations went ashore, leaving these old friends aboard. They all went downstairs for a late supper. But Nyesterov came on deck to invite all of us *poputchiki* (fellow travelers) to join the party.

A cold breeze stirred the Volga. The city was dimly lighted,

and the distant shore to the East stretched like an immense shadow beneath the low-hanging stars. From the chilly deck we went down to a cozy, softly lighted cabin where we sat down at a table with a boiling samovar in the center surrounded by platters of broiled fish, breadstuffs, and numerous bottles of vodka.

Watching our host in this intimate setting I recalled the stories then current in Moscow about his fabulous capacity for alcohol. What truth was there in those tales? At this party I learned the answer. Rykov was one of those amazing Russians who can drink vodka as if it were water. While conversing with his old friends, he swallowed glass after glass of the firewater without any visible effect on the lucidity of his mind or the evenness of his speech. The more he drank, the keener became his wit, the more brilliant his repartee. Yagoda, Koltsov, and the others got tipsier and tipsier. Only Rykov remained calm, unruffled, totally unaffected, it seemed, by what he drank. Finally, someone suggested a toast to an absent comrade. This time Rykov merely raised the glass to his lips.

Koltsov was quick to notice it. He taunted the Premier, demanding to know whether the "bravest of bolshevik drinkers has lost his nerve."

Koltsov's allusion to Rykov's well-known habit raised a great laugh in which the Premier joined.

"I passed up this one," he said, "because over in ice-cold Narim I learned something about the art of drinking."

"Why not let us in on the secret?" asked Koltsov.

"It's simple," said Rykov. "Eat while you drink, is the first rule. The second, avoid the glass that turns good humor into lunacy. We all know that glass if we obey our instincts. The trouble with many people is that they ignore their instincts. I never do. I have never been drunk."

It was literally true. Though a sufficiently famous drinker to have vodka named after him, Rykov always remained master of himself and his environment.

As our journey continued I became very fond of the man.

With every passing day I could see more and more in him of the goodness as well as the harmless vices of the great Russian muzhiks. He was truly one of them. In villages on either side of the Volga he visited numerous peasant huts, making himself thoroughly at home with his humble hosts. He spoke their language and understood their needs. Always mindful of what they had gone through in the terrible years of military communism, he would strive to allay their fears and stir their hope of better days ahead.

He had an abhorrence of demagogic tricks and melodramatic speeches. In village after village I heard him say quite simply to the peasants: "Don't be afraid of the Cheka, or the GPU as we call it nowadays. Don't be afraid. Talk to me as you would to a friend who wants to serve you. That's what I am here for."

Then he would point to Yagoda. "Here you see the Vice-Commissar of the GPU. I brought him with me in order to assure you in his presence that from now on no one will confiscate your grain or any other property that rightfully belongs to you. Comrade Yagoda's duty is to safeguard your rights and to punish all who oppress or exploit you, be they *kulaks* or corrupt officials."

Such words carried conviction. We felt their effect over the whole countryside.

"What is a kulak?" asked an old peasant. "Can it be a muzhik who owns a horse, a cow, and some poultry?" And another: "What can one legally own without being a kulak?"

In his reply to these questions which plagued a hundred million villagers, the Premier made the then recently decreed rural policy crystal clear. "A peasant," he would say, "may own half a dozen cows, several horses, plenty of poultry—and still be no kulak. A kulak is a rural moneylender, who collects extortionary interest in either money, grain, or labor. He thus has a proprietary claim on many a poor peasant household. He is, in fact, as vicious an exploiter as the Tsarist landowner. He lends you ten rubles and takes back twenty. That we cannot permit. The government should do all the lending of which you may be in

need. If we let the kulaks thrive, we shall soon revert to the old system—a few rich peasants in each village and the rest destitute. Do you want those exploiters?”

The answer was invariably a vigorously chorused “No!”

Rykov was here probably expressing an intention rather than conveying the exact meaning of the term kulak.

Tsaritsin* welcomed the Premier with another enthusiastic reception. There again I had occasion to observe Rykov's dislike of guards. A day after the reception we started out on a tour of the neighboring country. We left the city in three cars. On the highway we ran into a cavalry patrol. The officer in command saluted and asked the chauffeurs to drive slowly so that the horses might keep pace with the cars. The Premier asked the commander to turn back, but the young officer insisted on carrying out his orders, explaining that the forest ahead was unsafe. This time we all joined Yagoda in support of the officer. Rykov did not argue the point, but further up the road he told our chauffeur to “step on it.” Before reaching the forest we were far ahead of the panting, foaming horses.

Later in the day we ran into a peasant community of three hundred “souls,” as their elder called them. They had fled from the Ukraine during World War I, hoping to find peace in the remote, mid-Asiatic steppes. After six years of aimless wandering they were now on the way back to their native village. They had heard the war was over. They had some vague idea about the Revolution and the fall of the Tsar, but the Soviet Government seemed to them a bewildering mystery. Pointing to Rykov, Gorbunov told the elder that the man before him was president of the Council of People's Commissars.

“And what would that be?” asked the peasant.

“The head of our government.”

“You mean the bolshevik Tsar?”

“Yes, in a way,” Gorbunov replied amidst laughter.

The peasant was skeptical. He gazed at Rykov and shook his head.

* Now Stalingrad.

"Who ever heard of a Tsar in a leather jacket?"

Other peasants joined him, arguing that a Tsar must wear epaulets, a sword, and spurs.

"Oh, no," said an old woman, "you are making fun of us poor peasants. He is no Tsar. He can't be. I once saw the Tsar. He was all in gold and shone like the sun. We couldn't look him in the face."

Rykov put an end to the argument by telling his secretary to give the wanderers twenty rubles each, together with a voucher for grain at Tsaritsin. The commissar's kindness and his simplicity of manner must have made a deep impression on the peasants, for they pressed closer, chatting with the Premier in a friendly and yet somewhat awe-stricken way.

Rykov's simple goodness made it difficult to realize that he was the head of a government ruling over one-sixth of the globe. Early one morning, on our return to the yacht from an all-night ride in the steppe, he suggested that I take a warm shower in his bathroom, the only one aboard in good condition. Down in the bathroom I could find neither towels nor soap. The servants were still asleep, so I went back up to the main cabin where I picked up a newspaper and sat down to read. From behind the closed door of the Premier's office I could hear loud talk, for Rykov was already receiving rural delegates. At all hours, day and night, he was ready to listen to their woes. After he finished with the first delegation, Rykov opened the door of his office. He shook hands with the delegates about to leave, welcomed those waiting, then suddenly called to me from the distance, demanding to know why I was not taking a shower. I walked over to him and for some moments was unable to say why I was ignoring his kind suggestion. It seemed ludicrous to talk to the head of the Soviet Government, who was in the midst of conferences, about the lack of towels and soap in his bathroom! But Rykov insisted on knowing why I was being "stubborn." When I told him, he begged the delegates to wait and went downstairs with me to his cabin. There he went down on hands and knees, pulled a valise from under his bed, took out

two towels and a cake of soap, and led the way to the shower where he showed me how to operate the complicated royal gadgets.

The Premier's friendship seemed to have a mellowing effect on his Chekist guardian. Late one moonlit night I was up on deck admiring the Volga. We were sailing downstream through verdure silvery under a full moon. For some time I was alone. Then I heard light steps. It was Yagoda.

"What a night!" he said. "The full moon always keeps me awake."

The Chekist moved two deck chairs to the railing. "On a night like this," he said, "there is no sight like the Volga. And the memories this scene brings back! I fought all over here, on both sides of the river."

I sat down, lighting a cigarette. For some time I gazed silently at my companion. At close range it was almost impossible to associate this sensitive, soft-spoken person with the monster he was reputed to be. Thus far we had always met in company. Now, alone with him, I felt appalled at the number and immensity of his crimes, yet subdued by his gentle manner.

What wouldn't many a Russian give for a chance to be so near him, to see him reclining there, gazing at the moon, wide open to attack! Yet here I was at hand's reach. What was there about the man, I wondered, that gave him immunity from vengeance? Why was his appearance so disarming as to make it possible for me to keep him company in the night?

It was getting late, and I rose to go, hoping to snatch some sleep before a busy day. As I passed his chair, Yagoda took hold of my hand, pleading that I stay with him a little longer.

"There is so much I have been wanting to tell you," he said. "I hope you don't believe all those fables about me. I'm just a Soviet worker doing a vital job. With me it was all an accident, a chance meeting with Dzerzhinsky at Nizhny Novgorod. I worked there as a pharmacist. . . ."

A pharmacist, I thought—that is why his appearance is so disarming. Just the typical, provincial Russian druggist, one of

those inoffensive, obliging individuals to whom everybody turns for help in an emergency. The few doctors are aloof and hard to reach, but the pharmacist is always there, a dispenser of pain-relieving drugs, one of the few first-aid men in cities that lack clinics and have no room in their hospitals.

Yagoda recalled the day not long before the outbreak of the civil war when Dzerzhinsky swooped down on Nizhny Novgorod to do some "cleaning." He suffered a heart attack on the street and was brought into the pharmacy for first aid. This offered the young druggist an opportunity to impress the fanatic who was making all Russia tremble. Dzerzhinsky showed his gratitude during the civil war by taking Yagoda with him on a tour of the Tsaritsin front. There the young man got himself appointed head of a military Cheka unit. A striking exploit of that unit brought him to the attention of Joseph Stalin, then Military Commissar of the front.

"It happened right there," he said, pointing to the eastern shore of the Volga. "That's where I discovered how to destroy the enemy spiritually while he is in full command of his physical faculties. I did it in a moment of despair. To the few soldiers with me my experiment seemed nothing short of madness, but I proved to myself and to those around me that I knew what I was doing. When word of my achievement reached Stalin, he gave me my first important assignment."

Yagoda was determined to get "that night" off his chest, and I must say I listened with absorbing interest.

The young Chekist had been assigned to guard 104 Tsarist officers captured in battle. They were all picked men who had fought with a shock brigade. All Yagoda had with him to guard these desperate men was a dozen riflemen and two machine guns. As night fell they herded the captives into an old padlocked barn to await the arrival of a strong detachment which should take them to headquarters for questioning. Later in the evening there came an urgent call for the machine guns, leaving Yagoda's men with only a dozen rifles and very little ammunition.

"Towards midnight," Yagoda said, "the officers got restive. It became obvious that they were preparing for a break. Frankly, I was scared stiff. My men were in a panic. We were in open space, without cover. The officers could easily disarm and shoot us, then get away. When I heard them ram the door and saw it give, I decided that now was the time to test my theory of operational fear and hope."

"Operational what?" I gasped.

"Yes, comrade, fear and hope. For some time I had been thinking of ways to make fear and hope work together in an emergency. Here was my chance. I unlocked the door and entered the barn, followed by half a dozen riflemen. I told the prisoners they were sentenced to death by a revolutionary tribunal. That shocked and frightened them and paralyzed their will to act. Then I added casually that there was still hope for many, perhaps all of them, provided they were willing to help the Cheka with some badly needed information. Neither the fear nor the hope would have been effective alone, but the combination broke their wills. We brought them to headquarters the next day. They were condemned to death—a policy followed with all shock units. But in this instance the sentences were commuted. To make my theory work we had to keep faith with these first prisoners and let them spread the word. Thereafter the capture of shock brigadiers became an everyday occurrence."

Farther down the Volga I saw more and more of that Gray, Red, and White pattern of which I wrote later for the *New York Times*. In every peasant's or worker's home visited, in factories, clubs, at meetings, wherever people gathered, there were the many nonpolitical Grays, and the few Red or White extremists. Age seemed a paramount factor in determining this cleavage. The middle-aged were mostly Gray, the old were White, the young, Red. Old people went to church, clung to their icons, and yearned for the return of the Tsar—a wish which they did not hesitate to express in the Premier's presence.

The middle-aged were reconciled to life under a humane Soviet regime. The young were nearly all Red and enthusiastic about the Revolution. While chatting with the older folk, Rykov would fool with the youngsters and picture their future in bright colors.

"It is for them," he would say, "that we fought and bled. Before long they will take over and build a land which we oldsters can hardly imagine."

Under his benign influence they would all, Red, White, and Gray, become for the time being one great family. It was years before Stalin's apparatus managed to set children against their parents.

In the late fall the boat became a sort of floating annex to the Kremlin. Daily at the Premier's table or his desk I watched the Soviet Government in operation. One day, during the sensational trial of the famous revolutionist Boris Savinkov, Kerensky's Minister of War, Nyesterov brought Rykov a wire. The Premier glanced at it and said: "Well, they have finally got around to the sentence. My mind is made up. The counterrevolution is disarmed. I have always been against vengeance." Turning to the secretary, he dictated his vote as a member of the Politburo: "Against death penalty, for ten-years' imprisonment." The incident confirmed me in the opinion that the "judges" of these revolutionary tribunals were mere actors playing a role assigned to them by the rulers in the Politburo.

Another sensation of the day was Trotsky's new attack on the troika published in his essay "Lessons of October," an introduction to his book 1917. Here the War Commissar reminded Kamenev and Zinoviev of their apostasy when the Bolsheviks were about to seize power. He also reminded Stalin of his rapprochement with the Mensheviks in the spring of 1917 when, before Lenin's return, he edited the party organ *Pravda*. The publication of these undisputed facts drew concerted fire from the Soviet press. Instigated by the Apparatus, the papers loosed a flood of calumny against Trotsky. Aboard our ship the only

one to echo this attack was Svidersky, the Vice-Commissar of Education. The rest, including Rykov, refrained from comment. Thus isolated, Svidersky, too, lapsed into silence.

The journey was drawing to an end. It had been my second opportunity to observe life in provincial Russia, and it had been far happier than the first. This time there was no famine, no typhus, and a definite abatement in terror. On the whole, with the Rights holding the balance of power, Russia seemed well on her way to a new and more democratic era. Yet on the last day of our journey, when the Soviet Premier gave me a brief outline of what he called "essentials," I sensed in his words an undertone of apprehension.

Stalin, he said, had lived up to his promise to keep hands off the government. The people were actually free, though the widely rumored Soviet Bill of Rights was still only a project on paper. The delay in proclaiming it was due to a realization that freedom must have a sound economic foundation. The immediate task was to develop Lenin's New Economic Policy to the full. Only on that basis could complete political freedom be achieved. He paused, as though checked by some vague premonition of impending tragedy. We were on the deck of the slow-moving yacht, gazing into the distance.

"Of course," Rykov added, "all will depend on our ability to prevent a revival of terror. A group of us at the Kremlin are hard at work trying to achieve this goal. Unless we succeed in abolishing fear, all our efforts will have been in vain."

Crashing the Wall around Foreigners

FROM THE DAY THE CHEKA CAME into being in the autumn of 1918, the social status of a foreigner in Russia began to sink towards that of a leper. This was not due to any feeling of aloofness or contempt among the Russian people. On the contrary, the Russians have, or had, a primitive respect, almost a veneration, for foreigners. Many of them have, indeed, paid with their lives for an irresistible urge to commune with free men. But under pressure from the Cheka-GPU-NKVD-MVD, most of them gradually learned to confine their contacts with non-Russians within the scope of official duty or special assignment. Functionaries of the Foreign Office would meet diplomats and correspondents. Officials of the Trade Commissariat would dine with visiting businessmen. But after Lenin's death even foreign Communists began to find it difficult to meet socially with Russian party men other than those especially assigned for the task.

This barrier remained intact for some time after the Rights took over. It was futile in those days to invite a Muscovite to one's home. The mere suggestion of visiting a foreigner would bring on a panic. This notwithstanding, the telephone of foreign

residents in Moscow buzzed with calls from gay young ladies offering rendezvous. Most of these women were professional prostitutes operating under the GPU's strict supervision. In addition, Lubianka would also press into service well-known artists of the stage and ballet. No one dared ignore a "friendly suggestion" by the secret service.

The punishment of ordinary Soviet citizens who hobnobbed with foreigners was apt to be sudden and severe. For years now no Soviet citizen had dared work for a non-Russian without the Cheka's approval, which invariably involved a pledge to spy on the employer and report regularly to a special bureau. Neglect or willful failure to perform this act meant punishment ranging all the way from a reprimand to the "highest measure of social defense"—death.

The foreign colony in Moscow was shocked to learn one day that the kindly manager of the Grand Hotel, whom we all liked, had received a sudden phone call from Lubianka. An hour later a Chekist brought notice to the widow of his execution. Frantic with grief, the woman ran into the crowded lobby screaming: "The GPU, they have just killed my husband! He was murdered!" This happened while the Chekist who brought the death notice was still in the lobby. The manager's crime had been friendly relations with a Pole who went to Warsaw, where he published some anti-Soviet articles.

Some foreigners were so naïve as to dismiss Russian employees suspected of contacts with the GPU. They acted on the assumption that spying was voluntary. In bare truth it made no difference whom one employed. The GPU made it a rule to compel espionage by subordinates when their superiors were under suspicion, and all foreigners were in the shadow. Every Soviet citizen working for a foreigner was obliged to report regularly on his employer's activities. When Kotov, one of my employees, a man given to drink, fell to his knees one day pleading forgiveness for spying on me, I told him to cheer up and go right ahead. "If you don't, someone else will. Only be sure to tell them the truth!"

On my return from the Volga I found this situation completely changed. The turn was almost as rapid and radical as was the widespread fraternization with German soldiers engineered by the Bolsheviks in 1917. All of a sudden, Soviet citizens seemed to have lost their fear of foreigners. They were glad to meet any of them except the diplomats, who remained an outstanding exception. Jimmy Mills brought me the good news. For some time both of us had been compelled to live at the expensive Savoy Hotel because the few privileged Russians (stage stars, writers, etc.) who had rooms to sublet feared to do business with foreigners. But while I was away Mills, much to his surprise, had succeeded in renting suitable quarters, and he had learned of another vacancy. The actress Sobinova Viryazova had offered to sublet her beautifully furnished apartment for the duration of a six-months' tour. We went to see her, and I eagerly accepted the offer.

After signing the papers Sobinova confided that she had over three hundred bottles of old wine and champagne stowed away in the cellar. They were the gift of an admiring Nepman.

"I don't know what to do with them," she said, "and I need some dollars."

"How many dollars?" Jimmy asked.

"One hundred," Sobinova replied.

We clinched the bargain and decided to keep the stock for special occasions.

A block away from my new home the old Moscow riding academy, a prerevolutionary hangout of the nobility, now reopened its doors, extending a warm welcome to all equestrians, foreign as well as Russian. Before long the once famous manège recaptured a good deal of its old charm and became a rendezvous for the elite of the capital.

A youngish-looking former nobleman was one of the riding masters; another one was the Red cavalryman Andryusha Shirokov, an excellent rider and a born wit. Gvozdyeva, a former well-known Moscow sportswoman, managed the place. The remnants of the prerevolutionary aristocracy remembered the

lady and flocked to her manège, clinging to it with a nostalgic love.

From early youth, as I have said, I have had a passion for riding. At the age of thirteen I could hurdle, gallop, and race with Captain Safronov and his friends. It all came back to me at the academy where I purchased a superbly trained cavalry horse named October. After a month of practice I felt sufficiently fast in the saddle to take part in amateur riding contests, which before long became social events, drawing to the academy some surviving sportsmen as well as celebrities of the theater, the writing profession, and the government.

One night when I was about to engage in a contest, I heard some talk about a party to celebrate its opening. With memories of our ostracism still fresh in mind, I kept discreetly aside, feeling that Muscovites, though willing to ride with a foreigner, would not dare mingle with him socially.

In the van that night was beautiful Olya Vasilyeva, a gifted writer. Up to that time Olya, a dashing equestrienne and leader of Moscow's Bohemia, had seemed to avoid me, as if still skeptical of the new freedom to fraternize with foreigners. But that night there was something new in the air. During an intermission in the contest there was quite a hubbub among the riders. In the midst of it Olya turned in the saddle and stared at me from a distance. Then suddenly she wheeled her magnificent mare, Swan, and galloped towards me clear across the ring. She halted, smiling, and for the first time since joining the group I saw her at close range and looked straight into the depths of her pale blue eyes. There was infinite charm in those eyes—charm and daring. Everything about her, the ease with which she sat in the saddle, her graceful, wiry frame, the tender lines of her face—all combined to enhance her beauty. From the riding master Shirokov, I had heard lurid stories about the girl's past. A merry Bohemian, she set the pace in Meyerhold's communal home where the futurist poet Mayakovsky had proclaimed the slogan: "Down with shame!" Despite her youth—she was then twenty-three—she had already had several tragic love affairs, one of them end-

ing in the attempted suicide of her lover. At the age of seventeen she had been the victim of an unspeakable outrage in Meyerhold's communal home on Novinsky Boulevard. She was raped by an insane actor, and for three days the madman kept her locked in a room without food. Notwithstanding all this, the girl still set the pace in Moscow's Bohemia, whose adherents rebelled against the very concept of "bourgeois" decency. While abhorring commercial prostitution, these women followed a line of sex freedom that played havoc with home, family, and their own young lives. They lived for the moment. Impulse was their guide—poetized and glorified in song and dance, yet inexorable in exacting penalties.

Olya's was a startling charm that held one spellbound from the first glance. She must have noticed and seemed to enjoy watching the effect on me of her sudden dash across the manège.

"I am a committee of one," she said, "appointed to invite you to our party tonight. It will be an improvised affair. Everybody will contribute."

I told her that my acceptance was conditioned upon her inviting my friend Jimmy Mills, who had come to see us ride. She readily agreed.

The party took place in a stable thick with the smell of dung, with horses neighing and stamping on either side of us. We sat around a big table, helping ourselves to vodka and *zakuski*. There were no speeches, just toasts to riders and horses.

Vodka has a curious effect on Russians. The first half-dozen glasses, far from stimulating, tend to depress them. This is the reason, perhaps, why Russian parties seem to begin on a quiet, almost meditative, note. Time drags; table companions have difficulty in making conversation. This embarrassing phase may last until well after the *zakuski* have been washed down with several chasers. Then gradually they warm up a bit and begin to act as though they were really enjoying themselves. Swallowing vodka in ever greater drafts, they alternate drink with *zakuski*, indulging all the while in intimate little toasts to pleasant memories or happily anticipated events. Next comes a phase of hur-

raiding, applauding of toasts to host, hostess, honored guest, leader, cause—all depending on the occasion. By that time everybody is intoxicated and the party is on the way to becoming an all-night orgy. The lights are dimmed; gypsy romances are sung to the accompaniment of guitars; sighs, tears, laughter, and kisses follow in due order. Jealousy is taboo at such parties, and unpleasant incidents are rare.

When Jimmy and I sat down at the table shortly after ten in the evening, I recalled my experience at the home of Nepman Altschuler and warned my friend to be ready for an all-night *vecherinka*.

About one o'clock in the morning Shirokov, who knew about our wine cellar, suggested that we invite the company to our apartment. The riding master was already tipsy. He pointed to his throat, saying: "A year ago they would have slashed it for having you with us, but now we dare to pay you a visit."

"That calls for champagne!" said Jimmy. "Let's go!"

The company eagerly accepted our invitation, and we were soon making massive inroads on our cheaply acquired, but nonetheless excellent, champagne.

The Slav likes to take his joy in a mood of sweet melancholy. Watching our guests weep unashamed, we wondered whether their tears were those of ecstasy or whether they expressed memories of a frightful past and misgivings about the future.

At my home, as at the *manège*, Olya was the life of the party. Champagne seemed to enhance her charm. With her brilliant repartee, her daring, and her amazing capacity for drink, this girl soon held the attention of all the guests, even the other ladies. To her the men drank their fiery, vehement toasts. To her they sang their bewitching Slav airs. At Olya's feet the handsome guitarist played his soul-stirring gypsy songs. In reward for the attentions paid her Olya drank *brüderschaft* with every one of her admirers. With a sensuous twinkle in her sparkling eyes the girl twined arms, turned glasses bottoms up, embraced and kissed. Her invariably passionate kisses were bestowed on

every man present, not barring the two foreigners. This feat appeared to the company so daring that for a moment even those far gone in drink seemed to sober up. As Olya and I drained glasses and kissed, I could hardly believe that but a few hours before we had been worlds apart. Now we were so frightfully near that the room seemed to whirl as I heard Olya whisper: "Sparrow Hills, on horseback, Sunday noon. Agreed?"

"Agreed," I echoed. "Sparrow Hills, on horse, Sunday noon."

I fell asleep at dawn and woke up late, still under the spell of Olya's voice. "Sparrow Hills, on horseback" rang in my ears. But I was soon sufficiently sobered up to reflect that I owed it to my family to stay away from this girl. Early that Sunday, however, long before the hour, I was racing for Sparrow Hills, drawn there by a force that played havoc with both caution and fidelity.

At the turn in the road I saw Olya far ahead of me. She was going at a fast clip. It took me some time to catch up with her. Before there was time to say hello the girl began to act as though she had gone stark mad. Swerving sharply to the right, she lifted her spirited mare off the ground, sailing clear across a wide deep ditch that ran parallel to the road. As if this were not foolhardy enough, she dashed ahead over ice-crusting fields. A slip of the horse at the pace she was going meant certain death. I had great difficulty in holding October. He reared, snorted, and foamed at the bit, anxious to give chase. Suddenly, and against my judgment, I gave him free rein.

Despite his wide stride it took October some time to reach Olya and to enable me to seize Swan's bridle. When the race was over the girl leaned forward, patting her mare's long, curved neck. I watched her closely, determined to prevent another race. When I began to say something about mad riding, Olya cut me short.

"Of course it was madness," she agreed, "but the truth is I was mad, and still am. Here I had been looking forward to a pleasant chat with an American colleague. But just before I left the stable

Shirokov told me that you already know about my trouble up at the commune. Could it have occurred to you that I was only a child when they got me into it?"

Soon we were back on the road, riding at a slow pace side by side in the direction of the city. From the hills where Napoleon watched Moscow burn we could see its romantic skyline radiant in the sun. We drew up our horses, and Olya began to tell me of her happy childhood before the Revolution. As she spoke of those days that seemed centuries back, I could see her as a child. At heart, judging by her talk, she was still the average Russian girl dreaming of a home, children, family—the simple things that had been taken for granted ten years back but seemed now unattainable in a world turned topsy-turvy.

That ride to Sparrow Hills was the first of many. It was the beginning of a lasting friendship. Before long Olya was supplying me with invaluable but invariably loyal news tips, which I always shared with Jimmy Mills. And she opened for us the doors of Moscow's Bohemia, which even in this Rightist era remained taboo to most foreigners.

Chapter 8



Yagoda's Frantic Efforts to Balance Evil with Good

EVER SINCE OUR VISIT TO THE GPU, Mills and I had been hearing from Yagoda. He would telephone to remind us of our promise to visit his "children" at the near-by GPU colony for delinquents. As it had to be on a Sunday we kept postponing it, for our week ends were busy. But one evening his first assistant Prokofiev, a middle-aged, soft-spoken man with a gentle face, called and insisted on our going the next Sunday. He was personally in charge of the colony which, he said, was creating a stir among reformers of juvenile delinquents the world over.

"You will find material there for more than one article," he assured us.

Early on the following Sunday, Yagoda and Prokofiev called for us in a brand new Cadillac. We were surprised to see them both in civilian attire, but Yagoda was not long in explaining the mystery. He and his comrade thought it might embarrass us to be seen in public with uniformed Chekists. It was the first time I had heard him use that dreaded word.

"Please translate to your friend," he said, "that we went to all this trouble to avoid gossip about you two joy riding with

Chekists." It was a subtle allusion to my *faux pas* with Stalin at the Troitsky gate, for with a bright twinkle in his gray-blue eyes Yagoda reminded me once more that he was a "well-informed" man. Very soon all four of us were to rue this change of attire. At a railway crossing in one of Moscow's proletarian suburbs we stopped to wait for a passing train. We were quickly surrounded by ragged people who, judging by their looks and snappy remarks, were taking an unhealthy interest in the luxurious car and its well-dressed occupants.

"Some rich Nepman," remarked one.

"No, they're Soviet bureaucrats," another answered.

"Thieves! Charlatans! Robbers! Grafters!" came from all sides.

Someone in the rear yelled: "*Bratsi!*" (Little brothers!) "Let's tip over the car!"

At that both Yagoda and Prokofiev stood up and drew their revolvers. The yelling stopped at once, but the crowd continued to block the road. The train had passed, but we couldn't move. Prokofiev pocketed his browning, stepped out of the car, and whispered something to one of the men near by. The man passed on the whisper, whereupon the whole crowd turned and ran.

Mills insisted that I ask the Chekist what were those magic words. Our hosts laughed. "A professional secret," said Prokofiev. Farther up the road he added: "All I said was, 'This is comrade Yagoda.'"

On the way over, Prokofiev talked to us about his inmates. All of them were waifs with prison records for theft, robbery, or murder. As though in irony, it had occurred to Dzerzhinsky, the founder of the Cheka, to make this penal colony the one free institution in Russia. There were no bars here and no guards. The boys were free to leave at will. Some of them did, but they invariably came back.

When the colony was first organized, peasants in the vicinity forbade their daughters to meet the "outcasts." But after adequate training many of the boys became skilled mechanics, and

they were welcomed to many a peasant home. Some of them married girls who two years earlier had not dared to greet them.

In the colony, we found the boys, about 150 of them, in fine trim. They were a self-governing body organized in teams. One team ran a shoe factory, another a machine shop, a third specialized in carpentry. They cooked their own meals, cleaned their rooms, made up their beds, played in an orchestra, sang in a choir, played football and even baseball. Boys showing aptitude for higher education were prepared for entrance examinations to high schools or to the military academy.

They were all fond of Prokofiev, who knew them individually and took a genuine interest in their lives. Some of them seemed also to be on a friendly footing with Yagoda. They called him Genrikh, and he in turn called them by their first names. These special friends of his were boys with a record of several murders. He had transferred them from jail to the colony, personally vouching to the government for their good behavior. "Every one of them," Yagoda assured us, "has kept faith."

Prokofiev admitted that the colony was but a "drop in the ocean," that there were in Russia millions of homeless children doomed to death unless the government provided them with adequate food and shelter.

That night on our way back to Moscow we promised to write articles in praise of the institution. And here the mighty Yagoda startled us with a curious request. In a tone humble and pleading, he begged us to publish something about the colony in the American magazine, the *Nation*. "Much has been written about the place," he said, "but never in the *Nation*!"

We stared at the man, astonished at the vehemence of his plea. There were tears in his eyes. He seemed to be making an effort to keep himself under control.

"But why the *Nation*?" asked Mills.

Blushing like a schoolboy, Yagoda told us that he had an uncle in Brooklyn, an uncle of whom he had been very fond as a child.

This uncle, to whom the *Nation* was gospel, had written recently to Yagoda's mother, commiserating with her on being the mother of an "archmurderer."

"I cannot tell you," begged the Chekist, "what it would mean to me to have my uncle read something in the *Nation* about these children and what I have done for them."

There was nothing Mills could do about this droll request; under the rules of The Associated Press he had no right to freelance. I, on the other hand, could write for the magazines, and I promised to try.

On November 11, 1925, the New York *Nation* published my article on the GPU's colony for juvenile delinquents. Yagoda's gratitude was boundless. I saved many a life subsequently because of this indebtedness—until the time when total terror made appeals for mercy as dangerous as active counterrevolution.

The first and biggest installment paid by Yagoda on his debt of gratitude was to liberate hundreds of former Russian employees of the American Relief Administration. Mills, a Red Cross worker during World War I, joined me in this request. For years emissaries from Herbert Hoover had pleaded in vain for these victims. Governor Goodrich had visited Moscow four times on this mission of mercy. He never got further than the Commissar of Justice, whom Yagoda treated with utter contempt. Shortly after the publication of my article Mills and I appealed to Yagoda. He promised to act, and he kept his word. Within a week following our talk he signed an administrative order releasing all former ARA employees who were under arrest.

Chapter 9

A Play and a Party

TOWARDS THE MIDDLE OF 1925 there was talk again of a Rightist-Trotskyist bloc to stop Stalin. The rumors gained wide credence when Stalin failed in his desperate efforts to prevent the staging of Erdman's *Mandat*, a satire on pseudo-Communists, aimed at Stalin's underworld gangsters and racketeers.

For many weeks Moscow was agog with talk about the coming première of this play at the Meyerhold Theater. There was fear of riots. The tickets had been given out long in advance, but Olya managed to get seats for Mills and me. She arranged in addition to have us admitted to Meyerhold's communal home where a party was to be given after the performance.

The elite of the Red capital flocked to the theater, eager to see the party gangsters under fire. In literary circles *Mandat* was being compared with Gogol's *Revizor*, which in its time had thrown a glaring light on the evils of the Tsarist bureaucracy.

The immediate effect of the comedy was a roaring laugh at the Stalin bureaucracy, but in the long run it proved fatal to nearly all those who had dared to laugh—especially to author Erdman, to producer Meyerhold, and to the star, Madame Zinaida Reikh.

The play was a smash hit from start to finish. In the opening

scene Kolya, a young racketeer possessed of a party credential ("mandat"), waved the paper before his mother's eyes, giving her some pointers on Stalinist trickery. By way of illustrating his ideas of bolshevism, Kolya pointed to pictures of Karl Marx and Lenin on the wall, saying: "Mamasha, if you hear someone coming up the stairs, make sure you look through the keyhole. If the visitor happens to be a real Bolshevik, leave the pictures as they are, but if he is one of our kind, do this." Kolya reversed the portraits, and lo! they were holy icons! The public roared as Kolya smacked his lips, saying: "Always maneuver, mother, and look through that keyhole!"

Zinaida played Kolya's sister. To marry the son of a wealthy Nepman possessing funds abroad, the girl offered her communist brother as dowry. The groom's father, a former banker, insisted on proof of the family's proletarian background.

In the absence of suitable relatives, the girl produced a drunken organ-grinder, who, playing his organ, intoned: "As a tiny tot, Kolya would sit on my knees crying: '*Lyublyu prolyetariat dyadya, okh kak lyublyu*'" (I love the proletariat, uncle, oh! how I love it!).

As the theater roared with cheers and applause, there came from the darkened auditorium repeated yells: "*Stalinskie zhubiki! Litzemyeri!*" (Stalinist crooks! Hypocrites!)

The stage had no curtain. The scenes shifted under cover of darkness. There followed a series of stinging digs at the moral corruption and foul play which had been given free rein since Stalin rose to power.

During the years of famine the Stalinists had terrorized priests and their followers. Mindful of that period, Meyerhold had Kolya's mother contrive a way of praying unmolested. The woman and her servant, a grand duchess in hiding, converted a table into an altar complete with a sacred cloth, lighted candles, and a phonograph playing the liturgy. They then sank to their knees praying. The disk ran out in the midst of the prayer. Her mistress still on her knees, the duchess reversed the disk.

Suddenly the phonograph burst out with a Kamarinskaya—the gayest of Russian dances. This trick made the audience roar with laughter, and again there came from the darkness repeated cries: “Down with the Stalinist hypocrites! Down with Stalin!”

After some more “maneuvering,” Kolya became leader of a counterrevolutionary group. In the last scene he was caught in the act of attempting to crown the servant as Empress of Russia. The police finally overtook the culprits but did not trouble to make an arrest. As if speaking for the Rights, the Police Commissar said:

“Soviet Russia is now free. At last we can laugh at these silly counterrevolutionary plots. Go home, you clowns, and remember that our country belongs to the whole people—to you as well as to the rest of us.”

When the lights went on I saw the happiest audience in all my years in Russia. For some time they remained in their seats, cheering Erdman, Meyerhold, and the players.

On our way out we met the censor in the lobby. I asked him what chance there was of sending a story on the play.

“None,” said Kogan. “Certainly not tonight. This is a matter for the higher-ups to decide.”

The censor’s refusal was good news in a way. It gave us a chance to go early to the *vecherinka* at Meyerhold’s communal home.

The leader of that commune on Novinsky Boulevard was none other than the famous poet Mayakovsky. A giant of a man, gentle when sober, Mayakovsky could drink himself into a state of savagery where he was a danger to himself and to those around him. It was in such a state, I suppose, that he finally committed suicide.

Subsequently I often talked to Mayakovsky about his escapades, pleading for moderation in drink. At my home or at the literary club he would listen to me smiling but with never a word of comment. No one knew why he drank in that desperate way. Was it disappointment with the turn in the Revolution,

for which he had been enthusiastic in its days of bright hope? Was it the much talked-about unrequited love? I shall never know. I only know that, although he was the center of riotous attention in his Bohemian haunts, Mayakovsky was a lonely man. In both Moscow and Paris I often saw him in a state verging on despair. It would take two bottles of wine (he nearly always drank wine, not vodka) to cheer him up. On occasion he would drink half a dozen bottles in one night.

Before the première of *Mandat* I had met Mayakovsky only once or twice, and my chief interest in going to that *vecherinka* was to see him in his own haunts. On our way to the commune, Boris Berns, a friend of the Meyerholds, warned us against shock.

"There is one freedom," he said, "which the Cheka boys consistently encourage—unbridled sex. It helps to keep our restive youth away from politics, and it amuses the Chekists."

Like the NEP *vecherinka*, the affair at the commune began on a sedate note. The guests, mostly theatrical folk and writers, took their seats at tables well stocked with vodka and *zakuski*. The big communal dining hall was brightly lighted. For some time all were soft-spoken and well behaved. The party livened up a bit with the arrival of Avel Yenukidze, secretary of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. The "Lion-headed," they called him. Yenukidze was six-feet tall and sturdily built. He had a large head covered with bushy reddish hair. His face, too, particularly his yellowish eyes and the shape of his nose, bore striking resemblance to a lion. Though always dressed in a plain worker's blouse and boots, he nevertheless cut a magnificent figure.

Yenukidze's popularity was second only to that of Trotsky. Artists loved him because in the worst days of the Revolution they could always count on him for help. Now, as at all gatherings of theatrical folk, the secretary was greeted with cheers and applause.

A few minutes after Yenukidze, Yagoda came in, followed by Trillisser and Byelenky—two members of the GPU Col-

legium. No one made a sound as the three men walked to their seats directly opposite ours, Yagoda greeting us with a slight nod.

From the moment of their appearance the Chekists held the furtive attention of all present. From all the tables I could see people casting stealthy glances in their direction. Mills and I, too, stared at the men as though seeing them for the first time. Yagoda looked tired. He greeted Yenukidze and the hosts with a bright smile, and his manner, as usual, was simple and quiet. Trillisser's face was as sullen as on the day when he received the foreign press at Lubianka. Byelenky, stocky, bull-necked, and glum, looked like a typical Moscow butcher.

Their coming must have been a surprise to the party, for the lively talk around the tables died down at once, and the hitherto free and easy mood gave way to embarrassing quiet. Even the ever gay gypsies stopped tuning their guitars.

Obviously annoyed by the behavior of the company, Yagoda yelled: "Hey, gypsies, sing!" Instantly the guitars struck up a gay tune, and the singing and dancing revived. People began helping themselves to vodka. From various tables came toasts to "Tovarishch Yenukidze." A solo dancer went into a dazzling spin and drew enthusiastic applause. The *vecherinka* was under way.

Until about three in the morning things remained seemly enough. The guests drank, sang, danced, and kissed, doing it all within the bounds of decency. But shortly after three when they dimmed the lights I began to notice a difference. The talk around the tables soon rose to a drunken roar. Music and song were now barely audible in the ever mounting turmoil. At nearly every table one could see men and women in rude embrace. Through the open doors of the big hall intoxicated couples staggered in and out of adjacent rooms. The air was thick with the language of the gutter.

Some people, still self-controlled, tried to dance the newly fashionable fox trot. Mayakovsky, already far gone in drink, jumped on a table yelling: "Down with bourgeois masturba-

tion! Down with the fox trot! Comrades, obey your instincts!"

Most of those who had not already done so were prompt to obey their leader's command. One youngster, parroting the poet, shouted: "Comrades, act like free spirits! This is no place for petty bourgeois hypocrisy!"

I followed Mills and Berns to a side table, where we were soon joined by Yenukidze, Yagoda, and Trillisser, who like us were still sober.

In the confusion of swirling smoke, alcoholic fumes, and profanity, I saw a youngish, clean-shaven man enter the hall. He was dressed in a well-fitting black frock coat, gray stiped trousers, a starched-bosom shirt, a stiff collar, and a neat bow tie. He came straight to our table, greeting our companions like old friends. Yenukidze shook hands with him, saying, "And how is the baron?"

Yagoda introduced him to us as "the one and only Comrade Baron von Steiger."

Berns explained that he was the scion of an aristocratic Russo-German family. After the Revolution he had quickly adapted himself to the new environment and was now circulating in the upper spheres of the Red capital. Officially, he was attached to the Art Department of the Commissariat of Education. Unofficially he was liaison man between the powerful commissars and their favorite artists of the theater and ballet—a position akin to the one he had held under the Tsar, when Nicholas II and his grand dukes were the chief patrons of Russia's theatrical arts. Here, however, his function was complicated by a vast network of espionage.

The baron's field of activity was practically unlimited. He was the one to invite theatrical talent to Foreign Office affairs as well as to the soirées at the various embassies. In his excellent French, the "comrade baron" would introduce the artists to their distinguished hosts. In carrying out his delicate assignments the man had free call on the beauty potential of the Soviet stage. Zinaida Reikh was but one of his charming operators assigned to the task of prying secrets out of foreign diplomats.

Other talents on Steiger's list were the ballerinas: Abramova, Geltser, Podgoryetskaya, Nadyezhdina, Podryezkova, Dyemidova, Illyushenko, Reisin.

Yagoda informed the baron that Mills and I were two "lonely strangers."

"Oh, that you must not be," said Steiger. "I shall see to it that you are properly entertained." He did in fact subsequently invite us to intimate soirées both in and out of the Kremlin—affairs which, he assured us, were every bit as gay as any he had seen under the Tsar.

On our way home Berns, who was the son of a former vice-president of the All-Russian Insurance Company, told us: "Steiger is probably the worst insurance risk in Moscow. He knows too many secrets." In due time these words proved to have been prophetic. Steiger was executed in the Great Purge together with Yenukidze and Karakhan.

Chapter IO



Premier Rykov at His Kremlin Home

SHORTLY AFTER OUR INSPECTION of the GPU prison I visited Rykov at his Kremlin home. It was the first of many such visits during that crucial decade in Soviet history. In his own environment, Alexei Ivanovich soon made one forget that he was the chief executive of a great country. Simple in his habits, unforgetful of his privations in exile, the Soviet Premier lived in a small, gray-walled, modestly furnished apartment. There in the years to come I was to meet practically all the leaders of the government and party, with but one exception—Stalin. Though his apartment was in the same building, the Party Secretary never turned up during those visits. Nor did I ever see him at Yenukidze's, another next-door neighbor and his childhood friend.

People in Moscow who knew of my contacts in the Kremlin assumed that I was on good terms with the boss of the ruling party and met him regularly along with the rest. They were right in a way. Although I didn't see the man, I was always aware of his presence near by. Indeed, few gatherings of Rights occurred at the Kremlin in which there was not some whispered, or perhaps audible, reference to Stalin as "He" or "Him."

His name was rarely mentioned. While conversing with Rykov, I would see his secretary Nyesterov drop in and hear him say: "He is on the telephone," or, "He wants the papers," or, "He is waiting for you."

That "He" would be spoken in a serious, sometimes grave, tone. I remember one occasion when Nyesterov stepped into the room, pale with fright. "He is raging mad," he said. "He wants to see you at once."

Though a man without fear, Rykov seemed to lose his calm. He left the room precipitously and was gone for some time. Nyesterov, who remained with me, talked of other things. When Alexei Ivanovich finally returned, he was composed as usual. His only reference to the incident was to tell Nyesterov: "It's quite all right."

Yet Rykov's strained calm and his secretary's worried look stayed with me. There was apparently no escape from the ever present menace of this "He" that hung over the citadel like a sinister shadow. My painful awareness of his presence grew steadily, notwithstanding numerous signs that the Rights were in genuine control of the government and were reaching out for a firm hold on the Party Secretariat.

For some time in our conversation Rykov avoided any reference to Stalin. On the Volga he had mentioned the name only once. He never referred to the incident at the Troitsky gate that had kept me awake with such dark forebodings. He seemed eager that I forget when "He," according to Nyesterov, was "raging mad." The first time I heard the Premier talk about Stalin at length was when I questioned him about his rumored move to abolish the death penalty.

"You've heard only part of the truth," he said. "To abolish the terror and the death penalty is but one step on our way to a genuine Soviet democracy. We have to get rid of the diseased and corrupted party cells which we owe chiefly to Stalin. Under his Secretaryship many of the party nuclei have become mere hideouts for criminals masquerading as Communists. They sabotage our work in factories, on farms, and in state institu-

tions, banking on Stalinist immunity in defying the government. This infiltration of crooks and gangsters is a growing menace."

We sat up late that night. Step by step the Premier traced the current situation to its fundamental source in Stalin's thirst for power and his innate passion for intrigue. Stalin's talent in this direction, Rykov explained, was of considerable help to the Bolsheviks throughout the civil war. While Trotsky's great oratory kindled the idealism and revolutionary ardor of the Red Army, Stalin would be trouble shooting behind the scenes. He lined up on the Soviet side the turbulent underworld elements that would as soon fight for the Tsar as for the Revolution. There were battles in which whole regiments, brigades, and even divisions switched from one side to the other. They would go into the fight under Tsarist banners and emerge with the Reds, or vice versa. Many a Red victory was due to Stalin's ability to disarm the foe through intrigue. In prerevolutionary times, he helped keep the Bolshevik Party in funds by staging holdups and bank robberies. Those achievements assured Stalin a leading role, which the Moderates never disputed until after Lenin's death when Stalin's genius for intrigue became a liability instead of an asset.

Rykov stressed that there was nothing personal in his quarrels with Stalin. He had known the man in exile and had had no trouble with him. It was only after Lenin fell ill that the Secretary began to staff the party machine with gangsters. The moderate leaders warned him of the dangers inherent in this policy. They told Stalin that in the end he would have on his hands a gang of criminals to whose base instincts he would have to cater to preserve their loyalty. Stalin, who, according to Rykov, was often pliant in his dealings with the Rights, admitted the force of their argument but pleaded the necessity of a choice between this and the menace of a military *coup d'état* under Trotsky. Stalin always stressed the Bonapartist peril inherent in Trotsky's tremendous appeal to the soldiers. He never mentioned it in public, but at Politburo meetings and in intimate party circles he was always harping on this theme. The Rights, too, Rykov admitted, were on the alert against Napoleonic tendencies, but

he felt it was not so much the individuals, Stalin or Trotsky, that menaced the country as the forces they had brought into being.

Rykov recounted a talk with Stalin in which he, as leader of the Rights, had summed up their common-sense program. It was substantially this: Lenin honestly admitted his grave error in banking on a quick world revolution; its failure had compelled the vast retreat of 1921, the New Economic Policy, abandonment of military communism at home, and a rapprochement with capitalism abroad.

Stalin, Rykov said, accepted the retreat without reservations. He proclaimed his doctrine of "socialism in one country," to which the Moderates readily subscribed. With this as a basis, they felt they could conciliate the people at home as well as allay suspicions abroad. To accomplish these ends it was necessary to develop the NEP in Russia and abolish the Comintern. Trotsky insisted on maintaining the Comintern, though he did little to keep it alive, while Stalin actually kept it going through his agents operating both officially and under cover.

To make his position clear Rykov stated that even in Lenin's time he, as well as other leading Bolsheviks, had felt that Russia, industrially decades behind the West, was not called upon to lead the world in social revolution. They believed that international socialist leadership should be left to countries in the van of industrial progress. It was on this condition that Rykov had assumed his duties as chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. In all his talks with Stalin on this subject he had made it crystal-clear that the only way to convince the West of Moscow's noninterference in their internal affairs was to put an end to the typical Soviet casuistries, which never deceived anyone in or out of Russia.

Here the Premier paused to ask me whether I had ever heard any of the official Soviet explanations of Moscow's leading role in the Comintern. I recalled a chat with a member of the Foreign Office Collegium (Feodor Rothstein), who without blushing compared the Comintern with the Roman Catholic Church, arguing that Moscow had as much right to run its ideological world center as the Vatican has to administer the Holy See.

"Here you have a typical Stalin-Zinoviev casuistry," said Rykov. "It is one of those abysmal stupidities which they have strewn all over the world."

The Kremlin chimes rang out midnight. About to leave, I asked the Premier whether the prospects of a truly democratic Soviet Union were as bright now as they had seemed to him on the day when he took office. Rykov's reply remains in memory, a poignant reminder of Stalin's rare talent for confusing and disarming his adversaries.

"We must choose," Rykov said, "between a probability and a dead certainty. Stalin may or may not be aiming for dictatorship, but it is certain that Trotsky's determination to make Russia a center of world revolution will in the long run bring us to war and destruction. And there is the additional likelihood of one of Trotsky's military geniuses like Tukhachevsky becoming a Russian Napoleon."

Thus, despite their knowledge that Stalin was a growing menace, Rykov and his friends refused to join hands with Trotsky—a step which at that time would have resulted in Stalin's quick and painless removal. Like the leaders of the world's great democracies during World War II, the Moderates in the Kremlin were beguiled by Stalin's maneuvers, his consummate acting, his genius for deceit, his promises which he would keep scrupulously so long as a show of good faith helped to further his hidden designs. Although they knew all about his underhand activities in the secretariat, the Rights, and even some of the leading Trotskyists, were taken in by Stalin's adroitness in exploiting the menace of counterrevolution. His ultimate weapon in every crisis was a timely reminder that the alternative to a dictated unity was to hang separately on Tsarist gallows.

That night, despite Rykov's abiding optimism, I had a premonition of impending tragedy. For the moment I could not help blaming both the Rights and the Trotskyists for their failure to act while there was still time. It took Yalta and Potsdam to give me an adequate perception of the astute politician those idealists were up against.

Chapter II

Terror Strikes at My Door

NEWS OF GREAT SOVIET REFORMS in the making reached me just as I was thinking of giving up my job in Moscow. My work there had gradually deteriorated into a daily routine of sending monotonous, heavily censored cables paraphrasing handouts from the Foreign Office and colored news in the Soviet press. All efforts to cable reports based on well-founded background material proved futile. Censor Kogan, though obdurate, was invariably friendly. In the very act of mutilating a story he would remind me that he was trying his best to keep me out of trouble. "You know too much," he would say. "Don't forget there is a censor whom you guys never see!"

Kogan's words stirred in my mind painful memories of the "hidden perils" lurking in Tsarist Russia, against which I had been warned in my youth. The evils I ran from years ago were still there, and often I lay awake nights thinking it was high time to leave Russia again. I wrote Merrill and Wilkinson of my intention to quit. Wilkinson agreed, but Merrill urged me to stay on, still hoping that the Rights might prevail. Merrill's letter, coupled with the new talk of reforms to come, made me hold out a while longer.

But after that intimate talk with Rykov I could see no reason

for further delay. The situation, as I thought about it on my way home from the Kremlin, appeared quite hopeless. When the Premier began his talk about Stalin he made me feel that the man was on his way out. But the hesitancy and misgivings he revealed towards the end convinced me that the Rights lacked the force to cope with the situation. After nearly three years of search for an answer to the question: whither Russia? I had learned, on the highest authority, that the country was menaced with a Stalinist tyranny. Opposing it were ineffectual men of good will. Like most liberals the world over, the Moderates were pinning their hope on TIME. They were ignoring the warning of Krassin, the strongest man in their group, who never tired of repeating that time was on Stalin's side.

A few days after my evening with Rykov I notified New York of my determination to quit. My editors suggested that I either wait for the arrival of a replacement or train a temporary substitute. I chose the latter course. While doing so, I met a Britisher whose acquaintance brought a radical change in my plans. He was Norman Weisz, a wealthy London jeweler connected with the English magnate Solly Joel, who had enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the precious-stone market in Western Europe until challenged by the French firm of Frankiani & Friedman. For some time now the Paris firm had done nearly all of its buying in Soviet Russia. In the absence of private wholesale jewelers, it dealt exclusively with the two government institutions, Gokhran (Soviet Treasury) and MUT (Moscow Jewelry Trust). Thus far, no foreign jeweler had succeeded in competing with Frankiani & Friedman, the competitors of this firm being kept out of Moscow through the simple expedient of refusing them the Soviet visa. Behind this operation was a group of corrupt officials headed by the highly influential Stalinist, Dubrovitsky. To stop this racket the government lifted all restrictions on the permits of jewelers to enter Russia. It was then that Norman Weisz came to Moscow.

In 1925-26, periodic sales of jewelry highlighted the Kremlin's new economic trend. They were in line with the policy of

increasing the export of nonessentials and the import of badly needed machinery. Notwithstanding their importance, however, these sales were in the hands of a small group of incompetent officials taking orders from Dubrovitsky, who ran the Stalinist cell of the Commissariat of Finance. For reasons of his own Dubrovitsky favored the Paris firm. His official reasons were their solid financial backing by Paris banks and their willingness to buy all jewelry regardless of quality.

Weisz informed me that his partner and he were financially far more solid than the Paris firm and were equally willing to buy entire lots, good, bad, and mediocre. They had, in fact, bought one lot, but the sale had been annulled by Dubrovitsky. Weisz had complained to the British Ambassador in Moscow, who had informed him that his only remedy was to bring suit in a Soviet court, an obviously absurd procedure. He had heard of my contacts in Moscow and also of my plans to leave Russia in order to engage in law practice.

"Why travel five thousand miles," he asked, "and begin from scratch? You can start your practice right here with Joel and me as your clients."

When I offered to call Trade Commissar Krassin's attention to the breach of contract, Weisz remarked that the deal in question was a minor one and not worth the trouble. The Soviet Treasury, he had learned, was about to sell a collection of jewelry appraised by government experts at two and one-half million dollars.

"Unless the government intervenes," he said, "Dubrovitsky will let the sale go to his friends." He suggested that I see Krassin about this and, in fact, open negotiations for the purchase of the lot.

When Rykov would speak of corruption among high Soviet officials he had in mind Soviet Trade Missions abroad. Now it looked as though some daring spirits were carrying on crooked work right in the shadow of the GPU. They were courting the danger of being shot in the Lubianka basement unless someone in the Apparatus wielded enough influence to protect them.

I thought to take Krassin by surprise with this news, but he had already had similar reports of misconduct by men well connected in the Apparat. He had heard of Dubrovitsky. The man was strongly entrenched in the Commissariat of Finance. Officially he was assistant to the head of the currency department, but unofficially he bossed not only his chief Yurovsky but the whole commissariat. This he managed to do in his capacity as chairman of the commissariat's communist cell, which meant that he acted as Stalin's eyes, ears, and fist in an institution handling Russia's finances.

Dubrovitsky's record was typical. During the civil war he had served under Stalin as a military Chekist. In 1921 he was the head of a special trio empowered to confiscate church treasures. For his outstanding work on the "church front" he was made custodian of the Soviet Treasury. In this capacity he took to selling jewels.

Krassin regarded the annulment of the contract with Weisz as a crime perpetrated by gangsters controlling the party cells, hence as a challenge to the Rights. He wanted to have Weisz compete for the big lot. For this reason he was determined to see to it that the annulment of the previous sale be set aside. "Talk to your client," he said. "Make sure that he is ready to compete with the Frenchmen, and come back here tomorrow. Meanwhile, I shall see Comrade Rykov about the annulled sale. Only the Premier has the power to veto official acts."

The next morning Krassin had good news for me. He had spoken to Rykov, who immediately issued an order upholding MUT's sale to Weisz. It was a deal involving a hundred thousand dollars. My fees and brokerage came to five thousand dollars—out of which I donated, through Rykov, one thousand dollars for the "shelterless children." I was on my way to wealth, but also to mortal peril. For I had clashed with a Stalinist so well entrenched in the Apparat that he did not hesitate to intrigue against the Premier.

Dubrovitsky's first move against my clients was to enlist the aid of Briukhanov, the newly appointed Commissar of Finance,

in a delaying action. He applied for and obtained permission to have reappraised by a new set of experts the jewels which were ready for sale. It would involve a delay of months.

On Krassin's advice Weisz returned to London, leaving me in Moscow to watch developments. The commissars both of Trade and Finance assured me that steps had been taken to prevent trickery, but a friendly official of MUT warned me of trouble ahead. Formerly a wealthy jeweler, this man told me that Dubrovitsky had launched his campaign on the church front by having scores of priests shot for "resistance." His special terror squads had swept through the churches with appalling brutality. Throughout that campaign Dubrovitsky had been attached to the Special Division, the terror branch of the GPU, vested with the right of summary execution.

"He is a dangerous man," said the official. "You can never tell what he has up his sleeve."

The mention of the Special Division, though disturbing for a moment, was soon forgotten. I had, after all, the backing and protection of two top commissars.

Two months later my friend at MUT informed me that our competitor Frankiani was in Moscow. With him were a number of small jewelers invited by Dubrovitsky for the purpose of staging a fictitious competition. Once again I found Krassin well posted.

"You needn't go into details," he said. "I know exactly what he is up to, and I am going to give him plenty of rope. However, we must have your client here at once."

The Trade Commissar ordered immediate visas for Weisz and his associates. He also telephoned Commissar Briukhanov of Finance, urging him to have the merchandise ready for our appraisal. When I went to see him, however, Briukhanov seemed anxious to keep out of this business. He insisted that I see Dubrovitsky and make all arrangements with him.

Half an hour later I was face to face with the Apparatchik—an undersized, squint-eyed, sullen person in GPU uniform complete with yellow Sam Browne belt and a revolver which, by

reason perhaps of the man's puny stature, seemed much bigger than the usual sidearm. At first glance Dubrovitsky impressed me as typical of Stalin's Apparatchiks with whom I had had to deal during the famine. Like them he was glib of tongue and ever ready to mouth Leninist slogans, which he repeated in the tone of a deacon reciting a prayer. Judging by his constant fingering of the gun he must have been both yellow and quick on the draw. Apropos of nothing he informed me that Lenin had taught the Bolsheviks to "trade with the bourgeois, but keep an eye on them." He followed this up with the assertion that my clients were under suspicion.

"I took time to investigate your people," he remarked, as if casually. "We must make sure that they don't come here for the purpose of depreciating our merchandise by conspiring with other bidders."

This remark he followed up with a pointed warning not to expect special treatment from him simply because I happened to know high government officials. By way of showing his contempt for superiors, he informed me that despite suggestions from above he had decided against bidding under seal. His idea was to accept bids in writing and keep competitors informed of higher offers.

He ended our brief chat with a promise to show us the merchandise without delay. As I turned to go he called me back. Staring straight at me, while toying with his gun, he said: "I wouldn't get mixed up in this, if I were you. If Weisz attempts to sabotage the sale, I shall hold you personally responsible."

"Is that a threat?" I asked. He glanced at his wrist watch, and touched a button. My time was up.

On the way out I saw two GPU officers enter Dubrovitsky's office. They stopped at the door and stood by to watch me go. One of them was a tall, powerfully built man; the other, small and jittery. The smaller man turned abruptly and followed me down the corridor, halting as I turned the corner on my way to the elevator. His behavior, coupled with Dubrovitsky's threat, was clearly designed to scare me.

I mentioned the incident to Krassin. He considered these petty tricks an evidence of despair.

"They are trapped," said the commissar. "And by 'they' I mean not only Dubrovitsky but all the Apparatus men who are sabotaging foreign trade. If those creatures in the Finance Commissariat go too far we shall be able to face Stalin with undeniable evidence of corruption among his henchmen."

Four days later Weisz and his partners were in Moscow. It took them nearly a week to examine the pile of diamonds, emeralds, and rubies. Day in and day out we sat at a long table covered with a red cloth. On it, assorted in small piles, were diamonds sparkling with all the colors of the rainbow, rubies with innumerable shades of red, and emeralds as blue-green as the sea on a bright summer morning.

Every day on our way in and out of the big treasury vault we would pass several heavily armed patrols, and facing us right across the examining table were GPU guards in the uniform of the dread Special Division armed with rifles and bayonets. We knew it was all the work of Dubrovitsky, who would drop in from time to time, stand behind Weisz like a shadow, and then leave without a word. The show of force was clearly aimed at intimidating my clients in the hope they would give up either in fear or disgust. But we ignored it altogether, being in no position to protest against "extraordinary caution"—the official explanation for these extra guards.

Towards the end of that week I submitted our first bid to Yurovsky. It was \$2,585,000, or \$35,000 above the government's own appraisal. Yurovsky, a well-intentioned weakling, was frankly astonished.

"It's unbelievable," he said. "This is the first time in all these years that we receive an offer topping our own appraisal. I am sure Comrade Dubrovitsky will do business with you."

Yurovsky was wrong. About two hours later the little Chekist notified us by telephone that he had a higher offer. It was \$2,600,000—\$15,000 above ours.

"It is midday now," he said. "We are giving you twelve hours

to raise your offer. Comrade Yurovsky or I will be on duty until midnight."

The counteroffer, we learned from our friend at MUT, had been made by Frankiani. None of the other foreign jewelers in Moscow took part in the bidding. The decks were thus cleared for an all-out scuffle between the two big firms.

Weisz was in a fighting mood, determined to slug it out even if it involved risking a loss. He authorized me to parry Frankiani's bid with an additional \$25,000, bringing it up to a total of \$2,625,000, and to inform Dubrovitsky that we were on our way to the treasury, ready to meet our rival. At the Gokhran we found Dubrovitsky at Yurovsky's desk. He informed us that he had a new counteroffer of \$2,650,000, and that Frankiani was in the building.

"Excellent," said Weisz, "I want nothing better. You may call him in here and let him see our new bid."

On a scrap of paper he wrote out the figure: \$2,675,000. Dubrovitsky looked stunned, but he quickly recovered and laid down the law.

"Competitors will not meet," he said, "either here or anywhere else in Moscow. If I find out that you people have conferred with your rivals, either directly or through go-betweens, I shall call off the sale. You can stay here till midnight—later, if necessary. We must settle the business tonight."

The bidding went on until midnight. In a room adjoining Yurovsky's office we sat around for hours, waiting to find out what Frankiani had to say to our steadily rising bids. Judging by his eagerness to compete, it seemed to us that he, too, would rather risk a loss than miss the buy. Every new counteroffer came to us in Frankiani's own hand. Yurovsky, who brought the notes, left each time with our new and higher figure. We had no dinner. An attendant brought in some tea and bread. The hours flew by, hardly noticed in the mounting excitement. As Frankiani's figures rose to a new high, Weisz called on his partners to help him revise his appraisal of various items. By midnight we submitted a bid of \$2,850,000 thus adding \$350,000 to the government's original figure. It was then that Du-

brovitsky sprang a trap which he must have been holding in readiness for some time. He called us into his office where we were met with a barrage of invectives. In an ugly display of feigned anger he waved a sheet of paper:

"Here, Mr. Weisz, is a report on your doings in Moscow. Your so-called associates or experts came to Russia for no other purpose than to join hands with Frankiani, with whom they have done business in Paris. Tonight you brought them here, hoping, no doubt, that they would somehow get together with your competitor. Your bidding is all a sham. Now, here is my first and last warning! I give you twenty-four hours to leave Moscow—and don't rely too much on that lawyer of yours. He, too, may have a surprise before we are through with this business."

I looked at Weisz. He was pale and shaken. Only a moment ago he had been enthusiastic about the deal, but all he could bring himself to say now was that he meant no harm and would leave Russia as soon as he could get an exit visa.

Dubrovitsky's performance had been excellent. Watching him, I marveled how one could work himself into a state of such righteous wrath by the use of brazen lies. Yet, with all my contempt for him, I was anxiously aware of the background against which he felt it safe to pull such a trick. With an inside track to Stalin's secretariat, he was one of the keymen in the Soviet underworld, a person with whom very few could afford to trifle.

With this clearly in my mind I decided to avoid an immediate clash. It seemed foolhardy to start a fight before I had a chance to talk things over with the higher authorities. Dubrovitsky must have understood my reasons for keeping cool, for he stopped me at the door.

"As to you, Mister," he yelled, "I know exactly what you are up to. But mark my words—you are playing with fire."

That night Terror knocked at my door. For the first time in all those years I felt its clutch at my throat and knew the real meaning of life in the Cheka paradise.

I was staying at the time, together with Weisz and his experts, at the Hotel Savoy. They had a suite on the second floor while I slept in Room 303 on the floor above.

It was nearly one in the morning when we got back to the hotel. Weisz complained of nausea. We called in the hotel doctor, who prescribed a sedative. For some time we sat around going over the events of the day. Finally, one of my client's experts revealed to me that he had been approached by Frankiani on the eve of the bidding. Frankiani, it appeared, had suggested a meeting with Weisz which the latter had flatly rejected, suspecting provocation.

"We kept it from you," said Weisz, "fearing to complicate matters. But now the thing has got me worried. Nothing would surprise me with men like Dubrovitsky running the government."

On the way up to my room I heard the Kremlin chimes ring out three o'clock. Despite the late hour I felt wide awake. I undressed and picked up a book, hoping to read myself to sleep. For some time I lay there, seeing letters, lines, pages that made no sense. I was in a fever.

While talking to Weisz I had made up my mind to have it out with Dubrovitsky. But now, alone in my room, I fell prey to sickening doubts. In a land dominated by the GPU—that government within a government—what chance was there of defending oneself against a police conspiracy? As if it were all new to me, I recalled now that there was no habeas corpus in Russia, no trial by jury. And there was no American Embassy to help me in the event of trouble.

I recalled also some of the grim sayings I had heard among Russians. "Our people," one of them told me, "are divided into two classes—those who have been sitting in prison and those who will sit."

A current joke was a question on an application blank for employment. "Have you ever been in prison—if not, why?"

I remembered talking with old Butyensky, a former Moscow millionaire. "They took everything from me," he said, "and

threw me into jail. When NEP came they tried to persuade me to reopen my factories. I begged them to leave me alone. I could never forget the night raids on my home. One has to live through them to know the horror."

Butyensky's words rang in my ears, mingling with Dubrovitsky's threat. I turned off the light, but darkness brought no relief from misgivings, torments, and self-reproach for having gone into business under the Soviets.

I don't know how long I lay there, yearning for dawn. Suddenly I heard a tap on the door and in the same instant saw it swing wide open. Two flashlights pierced the darkness. In the doorway, dimly lighted from the corridor, were three men. One of them was Boyevsky, the friendly manager of the hotel.

"But comrades," I heard him say, "he is not a jeweler. Permit me to telephone the Foreign Office."*

The men stepped inside the room and switched on the lights. I recognized them immediately. They were the two Chekists whom I had seen at Dubrovitsky's office after my first talk with him. The tall one pushed Boyevsky aside while the smaller closed the door and turned the key.

I looked at the hotel manager. He leaned against the wall, pale and trembling.

My first reaction to this night visit was one of surprise rather than fear. For some moments it seemed to me that Dubrovitsky had hit upon a raid as a means to frighten me into silence and forestall my report to the government on his conduct. The possibility of arrest did not occur to me until the word was spoken. Even then it sounded unreal and faint, like an echo. I looked up from my bed and saw the big Chekist standing over me.

"Get up," he said. "You are under arrest!"

Over in the corner the smaller man was at the desk, ransacking my books and papers. Both men, I noticed, had on their collars the insignia of the Special Division—that gang of killers-in-uniform. I have heard of people whom these Chekists marched from home straight to the Lubianka slaughterhouse or killed

* Hotel Savoy was under the auspices of the Foreign Commissariat.

before they got there. What I feared most at the moment was that Dubrovitsky's men had no warrant to arrest me and were out for foul play.

While dressing I demanded to be shown a warrant. The big Chekist drew a paper from his pocket and shoved it back again without letting me read it. I insisted on seeing the document. He paid no attention to my request but ordered me to dress quickly. I stopped dressing, telling him I would not leave the room until he let me telephone the Foreign Office or . . . I meant to say Yagoda, but before I had time to utter the word the Chekist struck me a vicious blow. I fell to the floor, dazed but conscious. Everything was in a whirl. I remember one of the officers pulling me up from the floor and holding me against the wall while the other put on my hat and coat. The big man yelled: "*Idi!*" (Get going!) He slapped me time and again as I slumped against the wall, unable to move. All the while I was trying desperately to say, "Yagoda! Telephone Yagoda!" But I was dazed and stood there bereft of speech. I could only see and hear things as in a nightmare. One of the men opened the door, and I felt myself being violently pushed through it. At that moment I knew I was in mortal danger. The violence of the Chekists while making this arrest carried dire implications. I began to doubt whether these men, obviously in the grip of a homicidal frenzy, would take me to the GPU where I would be under the protection of Yagoda or Prokofiev. I feared they would murder me the moment we got outside the hotel. I resisted with all my strength. As I was being dragged down the long corridor, memories and visions raced through my mind. I recalled Safronov's words about Russia's invisible perils. I remembered Grandmother's warnings. I visualized my wife, children, relatives, friends. For a moment they all seemed near to me. I could hear myself crying for help, but though I tried desperately, I was unable to utter the one word: "Yagoda!"

The commotion must have roused people from sleep, for I saw doors open. On either side of the hall I saw men and women

in night clothes. They stood there numb and pallid as if paralyzed with fright.

At the entrance to the elevator I suddenly stammered, and then yelled: "Yagoda! Telephone Yagoda!" Instantly the two Chekists relinquished their grip. They stood on either side of me amazed and visibly frightened. I heard people running down the hall and up the stairway. The smaller Chekist became panicky. His face turned ashen. He stared at the hotel manager, murmuring:

"Who did you say he was?"

Boyevsky shook his fist in answer: "Let me tell you, comrade, you are playing with fire!"

The word "fire" was still ringing in my ears when both Chekists turned from the elevator and ran precipitately down the staircase.

Boyevsky helped me to my room where I lay down on a sofa, feeling like one reprieved in sight of a firing squad.

As in a dream I heard Boyevsky tell me what had happened before the Chekists came into my room. The clerk at the desk had telephoned him that men from the Special Division demanded a passkey to Room 303. He rushed to the lobby where he reminded the Chekists that the hotel was under the supervision of the Foreign Office. He was under orders to give no key to any outsider and to witness personally every search or arrest on the premises. They told him to come along but forbade him to talk.

I heard Boyevsky say something about notifying the authorities as I fell asleep. I must have slept some time, for I woke up in broad daylight and was startled to see the room crowded. At my bedside were Yagoda, Prokofiev, Krassin, Nyesterov, Boyevsky, and several strangers. One of them, who sat at my bedside, was saying: "Just shock, nothing serious."

Prokofiev explained that the man was a doctor. Yagoda bent over me:

"I have good news for you. Dubrovitsky and his men are

under arrest. It was lucky you did not go out with them."

The Chekists, it appeared, were members of a special unit assigned to guard the Gokhran. As such they were indirectly subordinate to Dubrovitsky. It was he who informed the night officer of the Special Division that a conspiracy to devalue a Soviet treasure was in the making. The officer ordered an immediate arrest without consulting anyone. Once out on the street the Chekists were free to kill for "attempted resistance."

Ten years later, when Stalin had no one to oppose him, Dubrovitsky's scheme would have been mere routine. But it was different in 1926 when the spirit of resistance to the Apparatus was still alive. Here was a case made as if to order for the Rights. It was not merely a question of settling accounts with dangerous criminals; it was a rare opportunity to expose the evil lurking in Stalin's secretariats.

The stir created by the incident made that a red-letter day for me. It began with an invitation from Yagoda to go with him to his office to identify the criminals and witness their interrogation. On the way over, Nyesterov informed me that Dubrovitsky had sold the lot to Frankiani immediately after receiving our last bid. Rykov, who already knew of my troubles, had ordered the sale annulled. He wanted to see me right after the interrogation of the Chekists.

At Yagoda's office things moved with a tempo rare among Russians. The guards brought in Dubrovitsky, his two Chekist friends, and their chief, who had given the order for arrest. Dubrovitsky looked haggard but surprisingly defiant. He parried Yagoda's questions with repeated assertions that he was "responsible to the party only."

Yagoda turned to the Chekists. Only one of them, the chief, seemed calm. His two subordinates, so brazen the night before, were now in a state of collapse. The big fellow's ruddy face was the color of wax. His whole huge frame seemed to have shrunk since I saw him last. The smaller one had difficulty in standing up. Yagoda gave him permission to sit down.

Asked who gave them the order of arrest, both Chekists

turned to their chief Pogrebinsky, who readily admitted the accusation and named Dubrovitsky as the man primarily responsible.

"But Dubrovitsky is not your superior," said Yagoda. "Why did you act on his order?"

"Because he claimed it was an emergency and threatened to take it up with the Apparat unless I acted at once."

The word Apparat was uttered in a tone of finality that seemed to impress everybody, including Yagoda, who nodded: "I understand."

Before the hearing was over I had vivid proof of the fear of Stalin everywhere, even in the all-Russian headquarters of terror. In a tone not devoid of respect, Yagoda informed Dubrovitsky that he would be held for questioning at the Party Secretariat.

The three Chekists did not fare so well. They were notified by Yagoda that they would be tried the same day by the Collegium of the GPU. That meant trial in the absence of the accused. Their chief Pogrebinsky remained calm, but his two subordinates wept hysterically as they pleaded for mercy. Their change from arrogant ferocity to abject humility was sickening. Out in the corridor Prokofiev informed me that the behavior of the two Chekists at the hotel was a breach of discipline, punishable by death. Their chief, he believed, would be held for a hearing at the Apparat and might get away with a lighter sentence.

Prokofiev's prediction came true. The two men were shot before nightfall. Their commander was sentenced to five-years' imprisonment because he had acted on an assumption that the emergency was real. Dubrovitsky fared better than his comrades. The Apparat had him released from prison, but he was removed from Gokhran and transferred to a distant post in the East.

At the Kremlin, Rykov and Krassin went out of their way to help me get my balance after that shattering experience.

"To begin with," said Krassin, "you may notify your client

that the sale is still pending. He may bid anew, just as if nothing had happened. Tell him that Dubrovitsky is out."

The good news failed to impress Weisz. On my return from the Kremlin I found him and his partners in a state of panic. They had learned about the night raid and were clamoring for exit visas, having lost all interest in Soviet trade. It took an official notice from Premier Rykov, brought by the commandant of the Kremlin, to make them realize that they were not in danger. They were further advised of a government decision to accept bids under seal. On this condition Weisz raised his final bid to three million dollars. Frankiani topped it with \$15,000 and got the lot after all. Jimmy Mills cabled the AP a detailed report of this unprecedented sale.

The net gain to the government from this first genuinely competitive sale was \$515,000 above the appraisal of the Soviet experts. The incident created a sensation in government and party circles. It offered vivid proof of the tremendous losses resulting from criminal machinations in the party cells. Even Stalin was, according to Rykov, profoundly impressed. Dzerzhinsky, founder of the Cheka and then head of the Supreme Council of Economy, went so far as to recommend to the Council of Commissars a five per cent reward for my services. A day later Rykov, on the advice of Krassin, Dzerzhinsky, and Yagoda, offered me a check for \$25,750—five per cent of the net gain to the government. To the Premier's amazement I put the check down on his desk, reminding him of my previously expressed determination never to take Soviet money under any circumstances. I made it clear that I meant no offense to anyone. Nor was it a gesture of idealism. It was simply a reasonable precaution against future intrigues by men like Dubrovitsky. As long as I steered clear of Soviet money the Apparatchiks would be deprived of a weapon which under certain conditions might prove fatal. The Great Purge of the Bolshevik Party later offered ample proof that my precaution was sound. After the execution of Rykov and Yagoda as "traitorous mad dogs," what chance would there have been for me to defend myself against a charge of "stealing" Soviet funds with their aid?

The commissars interested in the sale seemed to agree with my view, for none of them was disposed to press the point. But Krassin, a man just and keen-minded, found a way to compensate both Weisz and me. He proposed the sale to my client of another jewelry lot.

"In this situation," he said, "it would be not only fair but good business. We want men like you and Weisz to help us in our work. The best way to encourage you is to sell you this lot without competition."

My client appraised and bought the lot for a little over a million dollars. My fees and brokerage came to \$30,000. But that was only a beginning. After the news broke of the three-million-dollar deal and my part in it, I received lucrative business offers from London, Paris, New York, and several other cities. People having difficulties in doing business with the Soviets wanted my help. Soviet officials, too, called me in consultation. In a short time I became an all-Russian trouble shooter.

The demand for my services was understandable. I had dared the Apparatchik hydra and had lived to tell the tale. Even keymen in the Apparat were impressed. Stalin, it became known in party circles, had taken Dubrovitsky to task and praised my initiative in stimulating business competition among foreigners in Russia. The effect of his unprecedented action was to give me for a time complete freedom from fear—a business asset so rare in the U.S.S.R. that before long highly placed functionaries were soliciting my help in difficult situations. Maxim Litvinov's brother Savely, a keyman in the Trade Commissariat, of whom I saw a good deal in those days, summed up the reasons for this.

"Notice," said Savely, "that every time a Soviet official calls you in consultation it is with a view to enlisting your aid in approaching foreign businessmen. What our traders fear most is to be accused of theft simply because they took the first step towards negotiations with a foreign firm. The only way for us to avoid trouble is to let others take the initiative."

This widespread fear of responsibility soon brought me much more business than I could handle. Weisz went back to London, sold his lot for a handsome profit, and returned to Moscow for

more and bigger deals. Our second deal with the Finance Commissariat involved a two-million-dollar parcel, which we bought in the face of keen competition. Still bigger business was in prospect, as the government had decided to dispose of nonessentials on a grand scale in an effort to raise dollar funds for the import of industrial equipment.

One of the hardest-pressed men at the time was Commissar Yakubson, custodian of the Leningrad Imperial Treasure. A man of sterling honesty, he was entrusted with the task of selling collections of both museum and non-museum value. He began with the contents of Grand Duke Paul's palace in Tsarskoye Syelo (Tsar's village). He offered foreign dealers the famous Louis XVI collection on condition that they also buy the so-called ZET group, consisting of jeweled gifts of Catherine the Great to her lovers. Yakubson was hoping in this ingenious way to sell all of the merchandise on the basis of high historic value. After months of vain effort he applied to the Trade Commissariat for help. They advised him to call me in as consultant.

I found the commissar in the basement of the Winter Palace, which he preferred to his main office, the Tsar's reception room. He was a man of powerful build and striking appearance. A division commander in the civil war, he still wore a military tunic with the insignia of the Red Banner pinned over his chest. Three distinguished-looking bearded men were at his desk. He introduced them as scholars who knew every relic in the palace and the history behind it. "These gentlemen," he began, "got me and themselves into this mess by mixing history with business. Yilin, chairman of our cell, threatens to have us shot if we sell the jewelry at current market prices. The government, on the other hand, insists on a quick turnover. No one dares take responsibility for a downward revision of prices."

After a ten-minute talk with the commissar I saw that the situation in Leningrad was essentially the same as in Moscow, Yekaterinoslav, and Alexandrovsk. Everywhere Stalin's party henchmen were intriguing behind the scene and making trouble for those officially responsible for the conduct of Soviet affairs.

Yakubson produced his written authorization from the government. According to this document he had the right to show the merchandise and encourage bids.

"But no one," he said, "wants to bid against fantastic prices. The foreign jewelers who have been here don't give a damn for Catherine's love affairs. If you could find us a bidder I would move for a revision of prices. If I ask for a revision without a bid in hand Yilin will accuse me of thieving. Then try and prove my innocence! I would have as much chance as that Jew in Bokhara!"

And Yakubson, to the amusement of the learned academicians, told the story of a May Day celebration in Soviet Bokhara. The Red holiday happens to fall on a day when Bokharans according to an ancient custom castrate their camels. Early on the first of May a Jew was seen running through the streets of Bokhara's capital. He was stopped by a friend, who asked him, "Why are you running?"

"Because they are castrating camels."

"But you are not a camel."

"Well, you know the Bolsheviks. They castrate first, and then let you prove that you are not a camel."

The academicians laughed, but Yakubson was serious. He reminded his colleagues that Yilin and other members of the palace cell were on the warpath.

"Then why do anything?" one of the scholars asked. "Why not wait until the people in Moscow come through with a request for revision?"

"Because they are afraid, too," Yakubson replied. "They dare not act unless we provide them with a concrete bid which the Trade Commissariat can submit to the Council of Commissars for final approval."

I promised to communicate with my client. Weisz came to Leningrad with four expert antiquarians and jewelers. They appraised the collections in less than a fortnight and submitted two separate bids. Their figure for the Louis XVI collection was substantially higher than that of the government appraisers,

but for Catherine's jewels they offered only a quarter of a million dollars as against a government estimate of five million. With these figures in hand Yakubson moved for a revision of prices and was promptly authorized to go through with the deal.

On our way back to Moscow, Weisz and I had a unique opportunity to observe at close range the hampered condition of Soviet officials who were dealing in millions. Yakubson and one of his aides, Nikolayev, traveled on the same train but in a third-class coach. They lay on bare boards without pillows. Though it was midwinter, their car was unheated. It reeked with filth. The men had little sleep. They were hungry. Yet they hastily declined our invitation for breakfast in the dining car.

"If you don't want to have the contract annulled and see us thrown into jail, forget it," Yakubson said. "We purposely avoided meeting you at the station. Our Apparatchik, Yilin, is always on the alert. I am sure he has someone on the train watching us."

We were about to return to our car, fearing that we had already gone too far, when Nikolayev asked us to stay awhile. "We can talk to you here," he said. "This, after all, is not your *wagon-lit*." He began to reminisce. Heaving a deep sigh, he recalled times not so long ago when he was the owner of a thriving cotton business in St. Petersburg.

"All of that seems like a dream now. Look at the way I travel after completing two big deals involving a fortune!"

He admitted that with his travel allowance he could have taken a more comfortable coach. But with the money he was saving on the ticket his wife could buy some extra tea or sugar, rare commodities then.

"So here you see a Soviet merchant," he said. "When I am done with this million-dollar deal I shall return to my sick wife and our unheated room with its small community kitchen serving half a dozen families. My wife and I will go on worrying about sufficient food, medicine, cigarettes. As to clothes, here is my ragged prerevolutionary suit which I have been wearing

for over ten years. It is full of patches, as you can see. So are my wife's clothes. Now you know why I don't care to do any business—big or little."

I looked at Yakubson, the commissar, wondering why his non-communist subordinate dared speak so boldly in his presence. As if guessing my thought, Nikolayev said:

"Comrade Yakubson is no Apparatchik. He knows as well as I do that today the real counterrevolutionaries are not to be found among the former bourgeoisie; they are in the secretariat of the party, in nearly every Stalinist cell."

Chapter I2

An Invitation to Bernard Baruch

SOME TIME AFTER THE DEAL WAS closed in Leningrad, Rykov called me for consultation on a matter of vital interest to the Soviet Government. It was the urgent need of revitalizing Lenin's policy on foreign concessions, which had fallen far short of its objective—the industrialization of primitive Russia.

The Premier recalled that one night, on our tour down the Volga, someone had broached this subject. We were dining on deck under a starlit sky. The night was warm and fragrant with the smell of freshly harvested wheat in the fields on either side of the river. In the distance gleamed the lights of Tsaritsin (now Stalingrad). It must have been the sight of the town, already marked as a future industrial center, that inspired one of the Premier's guests to raise the question of industrialization. He was one of a local committee that had come on board to greet the head of the government and escort him to his next stop.

"For years," he said, "we have been told that the Americans were coming over to build great industrial plants. Where are they?"

"In America," said Rykov.

We all laughed, but our host was serious. He went on to explain that Lenin had framed the concessionary plan with a special eye to American capital and enterprise. Lenin had considered Russia's industrial task as formidable as that of the United States during the World War. For that reason he had expressed a keen interest in Bernard M. Baruch, chairman of the American War Industries Board. Through American friends, Mr. Baruch had been invited to meet Lenin, who was ready to give him a free hand in laying the foundations for a great Soviet industry.

"I discussed the matter with Lenin," Rykov said. "We were willing to let Baruch name his own terms. There was a fortune in it for him, but he wouldn't come."

The Premier smiled. "One capitalist who didn't quite fit into our Marxian theory!"

Leonid Krassin, foremost Soviet economist, had made precisely the same point in one of our many talks on the subject.

"Only American resources and enterprise," he said, "can tap our wealth, which three centuries of Tsarism have left practically untouched. What we need is a man of Baruch's caliber. With him at the helm we could work out the salvation of Russia."

Shortly after his dismissal as Commissar of War and appointment as head of the Commissariat of Concessions, Leon Trotsky came to a celebration marking the opening of a big electric station in the outskirts of Moscow. It was my first meeting with him since our ill-fated interview. On the train bringing us back to the capital, Trotsky avoided any reference to that unpleasant incident, but he had much to say about his concessionary plans, and again, as on the previous occasion, he mentioned Baruch, stressing that, with all his dislike of the negative aspects of capitalism, Lenin, like Marx, had a sound sense of its vital role in history.

To my question, how an outstanding capitalist like Baruch could be expected to strengthen the base of world revolution, Trotsky replied:

"Stranger things have happened since October. In the Red Army we have had two of the finest Tsarist strategists, Brussilov and Tukhachevsky, fighting the White armies to a standstill."

Such was the great vision of those days, inherited from Lenin. But it came to almost nothing. A few small-scale foreign manufacturers supplied a hungry market with petty items like buttons, combs, pencils, and some machinery parts. But they took out their large profits in foreign currency, thus depleting the very limited reserves available for industrial import. The United States remained aloof, and big investors feared to enter Russia while the intense strife for control of the party was undecided.

Rykov told me that in a last desperate effort to achieve Lenin's goal they had delegated Krassin, now Russia's ambassador in France, to approach Mr. Baruch in Paris and take up with him the whole problem of turning primitive Russia into a modern industrial country. As one deeply interested in the subject and friendly with both Baruch and Krassin, I was asked by the Premier to arrange the meeting.

As we discussed my mission, Rykov recalled what he termed a parallel incident in Russian history. "It reminds me," he said, "of the time when the Russian boyars sent a delegation to Rurik. 'Our land,' they told him, 'is vast and rich, but there is no order in it. Come and rule over us.' Today, too, we need a ruler for our chaotic economy. Let Baruch come here, and we will help him put Russian industry on an efficient footing!"

I left Moscow in high hopes of success. My first difficulty on reaching Paris was to arrange the meeting in utmost secrecy, as urgently requested by the Premier. A second difficulty was Baruch's flat refusal to visit the Soviet Embassy. This was years before America had recognized Soviet Russia.

Krassin had no objection to a meeting at the Ritz Hotel where Baruch was stopping, but that involved the likelihood of publicity. I found a way out of the dilemma by inviting both men to a suite at Versailles especially hired for the purpose. The meeting took place at lunch. After a brief exchange of pleasantries, Krassin plunged into his theme. With the wealth of detail always at his command, he unfolded the great concessionary

plan. It embraced a vast network of major industrial projects. Prominent on the list were concessions for the exploitation of metals and precious stones in the Urals; oil in Baku, Grozny, and elsewhere; pipe lines from Russia's oil wells to the Black and Caspian seas; timber and pulp in Karelia and the immense Siberian forests; fisheries and canning plants at Astrakhan; ore deposits at Krivoy Rog, reputed to be the largest in the world; iron, coal, and steel works in the Donets Basin; the Dnieperstroy and other power projects still in the planning stage; steel and tractor plants at Tsaritsin; automobile works at Nizhny Novgorod; a canal to connect the Volga with the Don River; a merchant fleet for inland and sea transport; the construction of locomotive and railroad car factories; the building of new railroads and repair of the badly battered old ones; a net of modern highways to replace the country's mud roads, which bogged down all Russia for weeks every spring and fall; and, lastly, the electrification of the country.

All this, Krassin stressed, was but a rough sketch of the design to modernize Russia. The major plan was to lay the foundations for a heavy industry, which in turn would bring into being a light industry for a land whose cities with very few exceptions were still barren of nearly every essential of civilized living, their streets unpaved, their water and lighting systems antiquated, modern sanitation almost totally lacking.

And the countryside, Krassin affirmed, was still worse off. From the Arctic to the Black Sea, from the Pacific to its western frontiers, Russia was dotted with villages that were mere clusters of shabby, straw-covered huts housing a hundred million ragged, illiterate, undernourished peasants.

"This," he said, "is our heritage from the Tsars, which we want to turn into a modern, civilized, prosperous, and happy land. We have been counting on you, Mr. Baruch. We want you to come over and do for us in peace what you have done for your own country in war."

Krassin had finished. It was Baruch's turn to speak. I wondered how he would react to this almost fabulous offer.

Baruch's answer was a warning and a dire prophecy of the

horrors likely to follow the superhuman strain involved in building a heavy industry when the people were still convalescing from the ravages of war and revolution. Baruch seemed to have a premonition of Russia's black winter of 1932-33, the fourth winter of the first Five-Year Plan, when over five million peasants perished in a Stalin-made mass famine. Baruch did not go into the details of Krassin's plan. Instead, he pointed out the inevitable cost in blood and agony of an attempt to do in a few years the normal work of decades.

And the financier had a plan of his own—one which he strengthened by unqualifiedly disavowing any interest, direct or indirect, in profits.

In flat contradiction to Krassin's plan of a heavy industry to mother light production, Baruch's idea was to begin with food, clothing, and housing. "First things should come first," he said. This, of course, would require an immediate revamping and repair of the existing transportation system, rail, canal, river, and sea. Next would come an improvement and gradual modernizing of agriculture and, prerequisite to that, a widening of the educational system in Russia and a vast improvement in medical care and hygiene. No grandiose development of electrical enterprises must be undertaken by the government in the beginning; instead, all effort and available means must be devoted to the sole aim of providing the people with the necessities of healthy life.

Baruch agreed with Krassin that the development of mineral, oil, and other natural resources, as well as the building of large enterprises, could best be undertaken by foreign concessionaires. They would advance the money, build, equip, and run the enterprises, and get a certain agreed profit. It would be large in the first five years, less in the second, and considerably smaller in the third. Thus, they would get back their investment with a reasonable return on capital and talent, and the concessions would then revert to the Soviets, the continuance of foreign operation being optional with the Russians.

Large water-power developments should be built and owned

solely by the government. Practically all the labor should be Russian. Russian youths would be trained as foremen, managers, and ultimately as heads of the enterprises. With the gradual spread of education, improvement in living conditions, and development of technical ability, Soviet industry would be under way to new horizons. But the building of government-controlled heavy industry should not be undertaken until capital and labor could be spared from the driving tasks of food, clothing, housing, transportation, and agriculture. . . .

The abolition of terror was to be a condition precedent to the whole undertaking. On that condition, which Baruch laid down in a manner of quiet finality, he was willing to proceed to Russia and get on the job, paying his own expenses as long as he should have to stay there.

Krassin sat silent, attentive, taking in Baruch's every word. He stirred uneasily at the mention of terror but quickly regained his composure.

The conference came to an end late in the afternoon with mutual assurances of esteem and an understanding that the door was left open for further discussion. As Krassin spoke of his report to Moscow and of the Kremlin's probable reaction to it, he had difficulty in suppressing a note of doubt. He knew that no one in Moscow would take responsibility for recommending Baruch's counteroffer to the Politburo. He knew also that there could be no talk of suppressing the terror while Stalin was steadily widening his control of the party.

The sun was setting over Versailles as Krassin clasped Baruch's hand in parting. They never met again. A year later Trotsky was in exile and Stalin well on his way to absolutism.

Chapter 13

I Become AP Chief in Moscow

AT MY EVERY MEETING WITH Rykov he had been cheerful and optimistic about the future. Even in his revealing talk about Stalin he had betrayed no sign of discouragement. But on my return from the Baruch-Krassin conference I found him in a mood verging on despair. Krassin's disappointing report, I soon learned, was but one of his worries. The farm crops of that summer had not come up to expectation. The grain reserves from the previous two good harvests were not large enough to meet current needs, particularly those of the army. The free markets in rural Russia had given the kulaks (well-off peasants) new opportunities to hoard and speculate. The government was therefore compelled to shelve many of its planned reforms. Far worse, in order to keep the army and the cities supplied with grain, the Moderates in the Politburo had been forced to yield to two of Stalin's demands: a fixed price on government-purchased grain, and the creation of a small militarized police. This police was to be used—for the present, at least—against the kulaks, who had lately actually threatened government buyers with organized resistance.

"In this situation," said the Premier, "Comrade Trotsky had put forth his demand for a much higher tax levy on the peasants—a tax aimed at a swift increase in our export of grain for

the purpose of buying foreign machinery." This time the Rights sided with Stalin in solid opposition to Trotsky. They felt that to add to the burden of the poor and middle peasants was tantamount to turning rural Russia into a sort of foreign colony to be exploited for the benefit of the state industry. Rykov's manner and tone as he commented on Trotsky's new demand seemed to me indicative of new trouble brewing in the ruling party. Aware of the Premier's dislike for party intrigues, I decided not to press him for details. The next day I learned from Sasha that the prolonged Stalin-Trotsky truce was coming to an end.

For the moment, however, my interest in Soviet politics was academic. For, on my return to Moscow, I was notified by Briukhanov that the Commissariat of Finance was about to offer for sale a new lot of jewelry. I cabled Weisz immediately and was in the midst of negotiating what seemed to shape up as a highly competitive buy when Jimmy Mills told me he was about to leave Russia on a roving assignment. Jimmy's transfer, it appeared, had been the subject of lengthy correspondence which culminated in the AP's authorizing him to place me in charge of their Moscow bureau. Acceptance of this offer meant abandoning a prosperous business career. Shortly after the revaluation of Catherine's jewels, Briukhanov told me in confidence that the government was planning to revise the historic value of all the crown jewels so that they might be sold at current market prices. As buyers with an excellent record, our group had a fairly good chance to clinch the biggest jewelry deal in history.

Despite this alluring prospect I was tempted by the AP offer. Uppermost in my mind were the reports of new trouble in the party. Again, as after Lenin's death, Moscow was about to become an exciting news center—the most exciting, perhaps, in the then tranquil world. On learning of my inclination to accept the AP offer, Weisz flew in from London. He tried hard to persuade me to give up all thought of newspaper work. He argued that at worst I was throwing away a rare chance to secure eco-

conomic independence. At best there was an opportunity to earn a fortune. But my mind was soon made up. I accepted the AP offer on condition that I retain my freedom to fulfill existing contractual obligations. This condition granted, I saw Mills off and went to work.

I took over from Mills at a time of widespread unrest in the U.S.S.R. The honeymoon with the Rights was over. In the ninth year of the Revolution they found themselves between two hostile factions about to renew their old feud. Still holding the balance of power, they were eager, as in the past, to avoid any move likely to provoke an armed clash which in turn might open the floodgates of counterrevolution.

In pursuing this policy Rykov's group compromised much of their original program. After three years in power they were still unable to agree as to the lesser of the two evils confronting Russia: a dictatorship by Trotsky, or one by Stalin. To many Moderates in the party Trotsky seemed the greater menace, if only because of his overwhelming appeal to the masses.

The more I observed the scene, the firmer grew my belief that downright jealousy of Trotsky's rare talents was of tremendous help to the cold, calculating Stalin as he proceeded to weave his far-reaching web of intrigue. On the platform and in the press, opposition to Trotsky remained on a high level of theoretic debate, but in private talk nearly every leader betrayed a deep-rooted envy that befogged his vision. Men who had spent the greater part of their lives in prison or exile, idealists who had given their all in a great cause, the bolshevik leaders with but few exceptions seemed invulnerable to human temptations—save applause and acclaim, which they loved above all else in life.

One day in the autumn of 1926 the Moscow soviet staged a demonstration against the threat of the British Merchant Marine to boycott Soviet ports. That would have meant a renewal of Russia's economic isolation, a menace so grave as to call for an immediate and striking show of Soviet unity in the face of peril.

On my way to the rally I was struck by the sight of streets crowded with men, women, and children instead of the usual columns marching under orders. The big hall was packed with civilians, Red Army men, and sailors. The foremost leaders of the party and government were on the platform—all except Trotsky. Yet the man's name was on everybody's lips. I heard it in the streets, on the square fronting the Moscow soviet, and inside the hall. The immense crowd, it was quite obvious, had come there to greet the former Commissar of War, who had not appeared in public since his demotion to Commissar of Foreign Concessions. For the first time Moscow had an opportunity to show its resentment against Stalin's machinations, and the people turned out en masse, eager to demonstrate.

It was five in the afternoon on a bright, clear day when the meeting was opened in Trotsky's absence. After some brief remarks the chairman began to introduce the speakers. One by one they came to the stand, spoke their lines, and were mildly applauded. Among the notables on the platform were Rykov, Stalin, Yenukidze, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Lunacharsky, and Bukharin. They all, except Stalin and Zinoviev, took their turn in telling the audience what they thought of England's action and its dire meaning. Each speaker tried hard to whip up enthusiasm for the benefit of the foreign press. But the audience remained strangely passive. Most people in the hall were waiting for Trotsky and were in no mood to listen to anyone else.

Then, in the midst of Kamenev's speech, a distant roar came through the open windows. It rose steadily in volume and vehemence and rolled like the thunder of an approaching storm. Presently it drowned out Kamenev's voice and, as he stood there vainly gesticulating, Trotsky appeared on the platform. Instantly the audience turned into a howling, swaying, screaming mass. Men jumped on chairs. Soldiers and sailors hurled their caps to the vaulted ceiling. For over fifteen minutes they cried, laughed, yelled, and blew kisses at their idol. For a time it seemed as if nothing could stop the uproar.

Trotsky tried hard to calm the crowd. But the more he tried,

the greater seemed their determination to go on cheering. As at the Grand Theater after the announcement of Lenin's death, I watched the men on the platform, eager to get their reaction to this outburst of emotion. With but few exceptions, every face on the platform betrayed resentment, anger, and consuming envy. Rykov and Yenukidze were the only ones who took the demonstration with genial good grace. They waved to the wildly cheering soldiers and joined in the applause for their wartime leader. Stalin was expressionless. At rare intervals he would exchange glances with Yenukidze sitting next to him.

After the cheers finally died down Trotsky began his speech: He started without being presented by the chairman. To introduce him seemed as superfluous as to introduce a tornado. As I listened to Trotsky it occurred to me that for the first time in all those years I could sense the glory and pathos of the Revolution. It was my first opportunity to hear the great tribune, whose flaming word had sent defeated regiments back to battle and victory.

Years before, in New York, I had heard orators like William Jennings Bryan, Woodrow Wilson, and others. But Trotsky was without a peer. He was a virtuoso of speech, a master of oratory who could play on the heartstrings of men with the ease and grace of a great violinist. In a few minutes he had the crowd hypnotized. They cheered, laughed, cried, responding to the speaker's every mood and gesture. As Trotsky, heartened by the tremendous response, rose to ever greater heights of appeal, his colleagues on the platform seemed to shrivel and fade in the shadows of the poorly lighted stage. Seeing this dwarfed Politburo, I could well understand the oft-repeated assertion that Trotsky, even more than Lenin, had engineered the Revolution, snatched it from mortal peril on the fields of battle, and saved the bolshevik leaders from the gallows. Yet there remained little gratitude among them for their savior, and much hatred and envy. To the people, roaring inside and outside the hall, Trotsky was still the hero of October. That very fact, however, made him a menace to his less popular comrades.

Paradoxically, the meeting called to demonstrate Kremlin unity in the face of a foreign threat turned out to be a prelude to the final onslaught on Trotsky and his followers. About a month following this demonstration I read the first official hint (not notice) of new doings in the Apparatus. As usual, trouble in the U.S.S.R. began out in the provinces. One night a bulletin by Tass brought word of the assassination of two rural correspondents of Soviet newspapers. Without naming either the correspondents or their papers, the report ended with the statement that the GPU had arrested a number of peasants suspected of killing the newsmen. Four of those held had been tried by a revolutionary tribunal and found guilty. They were accordingly sentenced to the "highest form of social defense" and speedily shot.

There was something novel and unprecedented in this four-line report of rural murder and retaliation. Up to that time bulletins of administrative terror would give names, places, and the institutions with which those involved happened to be connected. The Tass bulletin went no further than to indicate the region where the incident occurred. It seemed strange that two Soviet journalists killed in the performance of duty should pass on to eternity unnamed and unsung. Stranger still was the failure of Tass to mention the papers represented by the late correspondents. Unable to send a story without the missing data, I decided to wait for further details, due perhaps later in the night. They never came.

In the morning I telephoned to Dalyetsky, manager of Tass. As one of four or five correspondents under contract with the Soviet news agency, I had the right to expect its manager to give me the missing details. Far from co-operating, Dalyetsky, a cagey man, threw a veritable smoke screen around the event. He cut our talk short by referring me to Konstantin Umansky, then manager of the agency's foreign department.

Throughout the years preceding my appointment as AP correspondent I had consistently shunned this future Soviet Ambassador to the United States. Stalinist leader of the Tass cell,

Umansky was feared and hated by many of his co-workers and their friends, both in the profession and in the Foreign Office. They all called him "Chekistik" (little Chekist) and suspected him of systematic spying on his comrades. Their suspicions proved to have been well founded during the Great Purge when the GPU liquidated a large number of those who had had the misfortune to work with Umansky. The slaughter of those colleagues took place at a time when the "little Chekist" was in Washington throwing lavish ambassadorial parties for the fellow travelers.

That morning at his office Umansky was not content merely to refuse the information sought. Evidently informed by Dallytsky of my coming, he stopped me at the door with a sharp reprimand for being too inquisitive. This he did smiling his characteristic sour-sweet smile and offering me a cigarette to lessen the tension. Friends at the Foreign Office had informed me that he was not merely a spy but a *provocateur*, always on the lookout for an opportunity to get innocent colleagues into trouble. As if anxious to confirm this advance tip, he had previously displayed a too-eager wish to visit me at my home. But the more he had insisted, the firmer had grown my determination to keep away from him. Now he eagerly grasped at a chance to get even.

"Yes, you are too inquisitive," he repeated, offering me a light. I put the unlighted cigarette down on his desk and reminded him that under the terms of the AP-Tass contract I was entitled to essential details of any news items they carried. With that masklike smile of his, he said in answer that he had had Mills recalled.

"You will leave me no alternative," he added, "if you follow much further in your predecessor's footsteps."

To his surprise I remained outwardly calm, despite a momentarily strong urge to punch him.

In a sense I was grateful for his flare-up, since it told me plainly that there was much more to the brief death bulletin than I could read between its lines. The thing to do was to press

the inquiry further. Meanwhile it seemed to me as good a time as any to put the Chekist in his place. I informed him that I had taken the AP job at a great sacrifice and was ready to spare him the trouble of intriguing with my superiors by cabling my resignation. Firmness, I knew from experience, was the only shield against petty Stalinists. It rarely failed. Umansky's quick change of tone made it quite obvious that he feared possible repercussions. From threats and innuendos he switched quickly to profuse apologies and ended our talk by pleading lack of authority to enlighten me on a "subject of policy."

Abandoning Tass, I turned to the Foreign Office, only to meet there with still greater reticence. Rothstein, head of the Press Department, tried to belittle the event. He called it an incident which happened once and might never happen again. Censor Podolsky argued: "Why make a fuss about a couple of executions in rural Russia? Even if some of your friends tell you the whole story, I shall not pass it unless they authorize me in writing, and that they will never do."

Podolsky was right. There seemed to be no point in pressing the inquiry unless there should be other bulletins of this kind.

There followed a fortnight of gray monotony—one of those dull periods when most foreigners in a regimented land feel like hopping on the first train home. Then one night the Tass messenger delivered a second bulletin announcing the murder of a rural correspondent and again swift retaliation. From that time on these bulletins became a nightly feature. The number of killings grew from week to week. There were nights when I read as many as a dozen reports of violent deaths in the countryside. Unable to give New York the background of these events, I would sum up a night's tragedy in a ten-line cable. For some time I tried desperately to get to the bottom of the trouble. New York and London clamored for an explanation. Sasha, who was thoroughly familiar with the situation in Moscow, seemed at a loss to interpret this new trend in the country. Rykov, to whom I always turned in time of trouble, was visibly moved when I first broached the subject. Yet he impressed me as having re-

solved to avoid discussing it. One night I reminded him of our visits to peasant huts, of his playing with their children, of the bright hope he had kindled in the hearts of the humble and downtrodden. In the midst of my reminiscences I saw Rykov's eyes moisten with tears. He raised his hand in a silent plea for a change of theme. The good man's gesture served only to deepen the mystery and arouse greater curiosity. Yagoda, like the Premier, was anxious to avoid all talk on the subject. I decided to take the matter up with Foreign Commissar Chicherin.

Chapter 14

Two Idealist Bolsheviks: Chicherin and Yenukidze

CHICHERIN WAS PERHAPS THE only leading Bolshevik who never succeeded in divorcing himself from his aristocratic past. Like Leonid Gayef, Anton Chekhov's nostalgic nobleman in *The Cherry Orchard*, the late Foreign Commissar loved to think of his ancestral estate and was fond of Slav tradition.

Chicherin was a tall man with a sparse reddish beard and a reddish balding head. He had round gray eyes and was for that reason, as well as for a habit of working at night, nicknamed "the Owl." A scholarly descendant of the nobility, he had felt in his youth that Russia had a sacred mission to show the world a way out of the jungle of social injustice.

After a brief career as a diplomat abroad, Chicherin broke with his family and left the service, becoming one of those peniless revolutionary emigrés who bided their time in Western Europe, waiting for the Revolution of 1917. In recognition of his brilliant abilities and many services to the party, Lenin had him appointed Commissar of Foreign Affairs. Throughout the civil war the commissar was wholly absorbed in his work at the

Foreign Office. But when the war ended he turned his attention also to internal affairs. Above all he became concerned with the lot of the peasants. Their plight brought him untold pain which he never made any effort to hide. Unable to face the stark fact that his beautiful dream had turned into a nightmare, Chicherin became a virtual recluse. He would work all night, snatch a few hours of sleep at dawn, and keep to himself for the rest of the day. He was seldom seen in public. He rarely attended a state function. The magnificent receptions and balls given by the Foreign Commissariat at the Sugar King's palace were no exception. Late at night he would telephone to fellow commissars and rouse them from sleep to discuss urgent matters. No one took it amiss; from Lenin down they all admired this devoted idealist.

A bachelor and in poor health, Chicherin lived in a small two-room apartment at the Foreign Office. There, between snatches of troubled sleep, he would sit at his piano playing Mozart and old Slav tunes that reminded him of his youth.

On my daily visits to the Press Department, particularly if I had trouble with the censor, I would pocket my slashed and distorted cable and wander through the dark, winding corridors of the commissariat past Chicherin's door. There, if I heard the piano, I was free to come in without knocking. Sometimes the commissar would greet me with a smile and go on playing. It meant that, though welcome as a one-man audience, I was not to trouble him with my red-penciled copy. A man incapable of anger, he could make one respect his wishes with a mere gesture or a melancholy glance from his sad eyes. He always knew the nature of my troubles and was invariably sympathetic. Only occasionally, as if overcome by a sense of guilt or pity, would he stop playing and turn to me, asking: "Well, what is it this time?" In reply I would show him a mangled report. As a rule he would merely glance at the lead and resume playing. But on rare occasions he would like the story well enough to phone the censor and either approve the whole text or suggest a compromise.

The best time to find the commissar in a receptive mood was between four and five in the morning. At that time he was usually through with his night's labor and liked to relax before going to bed. Another advantage was the presence of his friendly secretary Galperin who, like Chicherin, liked to listen to my stories of the goings-on at the Literary Club or at the Gypsy Tavern, where I would drop in daily for a whiff of Moscow gossip.

That night, when I came to the commissar for enlightenment on the situation in the countryside, Galperin suggested that I write about the Literary Club and the Gypsy Tavern. "Why not give your readers an occasional laugh?" he asked. In reply I produced an urgent AP query about the steady increase in murders of rural correspondents. New York wanted to know who they were and what papers they represented. They wanted me to go to the Ukraine and investigate on the spot. Attached to the AP cable was a copy of my latest reply, censored earlier in the night. It read: "Unable go beyond 'Tass' bulletins on rural incidents. Press Department refuses permission my touring Ukraine."

I watched Chicherin take the papers from Galperin. He read them carefully then gave them back to me, saying: "Yes, this is no time for light stories. The way things look we shall soon have to authorize a special release."

"But who are those correspondents?" I asked. There was no reply. Instead, Chicherin turned to his secretary and told him to phone Yenukidze.

While waiting for the connection, the commissar looked at his watch. It meant that my time was up, but as I started for the door he called me back.

"Before you leave," he said, "I want you to know that the village correspondents are not professional newsmen. They are ambitious peasant youngsters writing for local papers reports on such hidden treasures as an extra measure of grain, a slaughtered pig or calf. All this trouble is due to renewed strife in the party." Chicherin held out his hand and looked at me with half-closed

eyes. "I am tired, my friend," he said. "See Yenukidze. He feels as bad about things as I do."

Avel Yenukidze, a childhood friend of Stalin, was for many years chief trouble shooter of the Kremlin. Wherever Russians were in despair, from the rulers down to the humblest peasant, they would turn to this warmhearted Georgian. For many years Yenukidze was the living conscience of the Revolution. At the height of the terror, following the attempt on Lenin's life, he was fearless in his fight against the blind sadism that struck down the innocent with the guilty. In his capacity as secretary of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, he handled all appeals from revolutionary tribunals. A one-man court of last resort, he always tempered justice with mercy. Having no power over the murderous proceedings of the GPU, the commissar repeatedly challenged its right to perpetrate periodic mass slaughters on the pretext of "saving the Revolution" from manufactured or fancied perils. Though one of the very few men who dared defy the mighty Cheka, Yenukidze remained at his post because he stood out as the widely trusted leader to whom all of the contending factions could turn for help and understanding. At the time when Stalin had little behind him except a mob of job-hungry climbers, he would turn to Yenukidze in every crisis. On his long, perilous way to absolutism, Stalin never hesitated to cringe before people in positions of power and influence. One day when Trotsky was still Commissar of War, Stalin took refuge in Yenukidze's apartment to avoid arrest by a group of Red Army officers who had got fed up with his intrigues, with Trotsky's forbearance, and with the perpetual compromising of the Rights. Later, after Stalin had gained control of the press and the GPU, it was Yenukidze who, with the help of the Rights, succeeded for a time in making him live up to his pledge not to use the death penalty within the party.

Yenukidze's trouble shooting was not confined to politics; it extended to science, religion, and art. In Leningrad he protected the laboratory of the famous scientist Pavlov when Zinoviev's Chekists threatened to wreck it in retaliation for the professor's antibolshevik remarks. In Moscow and elsewhere he helped Lu-

nacharsky preserve many of Russia's ancient churches and museums.

The superb Russian theater, particularly the unmatched ballet, was Yenukidze's own domain. There he was not only instrumental in preserving Russia's great artistic heritage but also was big brother to the artists, many of whom he knew by their first names. If a powerful commissar or Chekist threatened a proud ballerina unwilling to submit to his wiles, Yenukidze was always there to protect her. If Abramova, Kudriavtseva, Bank, or other stars or starlets were dissatisfied with their roles or abused by tough administrators, they would come to Yenukidze and get quick help. His door was always open to those in need. Perhaps the most humane and bravest of Yenukidze's deeds was to throw a net of protection around the former nobility. Throughout the years when these outlawed men and women were prey to sadistic Chekists, Yenukidze was the one man in power who dared defend them. The beautiful Countess Babrinskaya, my onetime secretary, would telephone the commissar from my office about the unwarranted arrests of her friends, and each time she would succeed in having them released. Never once in all those years did I hear a word of scandal involving this brave and kindly man. There was constant talk of orgies in the Kremlin, but Yenukidze's name was never mentioned in connection with them. Yet when the time came for Stalin to send this man to the slaughterhouse, the habitually lying dictator could think of nothing better than to charge his kindly friend with "debauchery and orgies."

The day following my visit to the Foreign Commissar I met Yenukidze at the ballet. He spared me the trouble of explaining why I wanted to see him.

"Comrade Chicherin phoned me," he said. "See me after the performance."

From the Grand Theater we went on foot to his home. As we were crossing Theater Square, Yenukidze laughed in his jovial, hearty way. He was amused by my total ignorance of the new turn in events.

"Here you are," said the secretary, "a reporter for a great

news syndicate and you don't know that the Apparat is again on the warpath. But don't think you are the only one who is uninformed. Our party doesn't know it either. Yes, the fight is already on. But unbelievable as it may sound, right now it is being fought in the villages. And the victims are chiefly peasants who haven't the faintest idea that their troubles are due to Trotsky's new demand for a heavy tax on agricultural produce and to Stalin's incitement of peasant youngsters to write to local papers about so-called kulak thefts.

"But what connection," I asked, "can there be between trouble in the Apparat and amateur correspondents?"

"It is all very simple," he said. "In two years of freedom the peasants, rich, middling, and poor, have become accustomed to selling their produce in the open market. They have naturally stored up some reserves. As a result of the reports in local papers many a peasant is now being accused of hoarding the surplus, which under a new decree must be sold to government buyers at fixed prices. The hoarders retaliate by killing those who write the reports. The GPU then strikes back with summary executions. This goes on day in and day out. The terror is spreading like a tide over a constantly widening area. By the time Stalin is ready to declare open war on Trotsky, the tide will have reached the cities and serve as a warning to all who dare follow Trotsky's lead. This is Stalin's method of operation. The carefully organized campaign against the kulaks is but a prelude to an official declaration of war within the party."

To prove his point Yenukidze traced Stalin's revolutionary career back to the day in Tiflis when he had organized the hold-up of a money transport belonging to one of the big banks. It was Stalin's first daring venture in the underground movement. The raid, which took place at midday, resulted in the slaughter of fifty-one innocent bystanders. The timing of this and of similar affairs was due, Yenukidze believed, to Stalin's passion for creating bloody furors as conditions precedent to his every major action. After we reached his home in the Kremlin, Yenukidze recalled an incident when Stalin, unable to act himself, in-

cited others to murder. On the day following the October rising in 1917, a group of sailors, drunk and armed with rifles, came to the office of *Pravda* to volunteer their services. Stalin, then editor of the paper, showed the sailors his pen, saying: "This, comrades, is my weapon. You boys have rifles. It is up to you to use them as you see fit." Before the day was over they perpetrated a pogrom that shook the capital.

As Military Commissar on the Tsaritsin and other fronts, Stalin's every move was preceded by a wave of bloody terror in which the innocent suffered with the guilty. In the midst of one of his pogroms he received a wire from War Commissar Trotsky commanding him to halt his murderous Chekists. He glanced at the paper and scribbled across it: "Pay No Attention!" It was an implied order to his subordinates to go on with their slaughter. Lenin stopped that pogrom, and Stalin remained quiet for some time. But in the excitement following the attempted assassination of Lenin he demanded the killing of hundreds of prisoners at the Lubianka, and he had his way. After Lenin's recovery from his wound, Stalin was again silent for some time. He was busy reorganizing the Apparatus. But during the months preceding Lenin's death he launched a campaign of terror with a view to preventing a Trotskyist coup.

"Now," Yenukidze added, "with new trouble brewing in the party, Josif Vissarionovich is up to his old tricks."

Yenukidze felt that Stalin's new campaign in the countryside was likely to arouse the latent forces of counterrevolution. He recalled two recent incidents in rural Russia that revealed the state of mind of the peasants, their abhorrence of communist ideology and of atheism.

In a village not far from Moscow young activists decided to honor a dead comrade with a Red funeral akin to those then in vogue in the capital. In defiance of the wishes of their deeply religious elders, the young Communists proceeded to stage a procession with red banners, a red coffin, a band playing revolutionary hymns, and no priest.

On a somber afternoon in midwinter this small band of "the

godless" started off on a three-mile route to the nearest cemetery. On the way, they were joined by thousands of villagers from the surrounding country who came to the funeral well supplied with vodka. Halfway to the burial place the peasants beat up the Reds, got the musicians drunk, made them play gay airs, and turned the funeral into a picnic. The rest of the way and on into the cemetery they danced, sang, and made merry until late that night. When the police reached the scene in the morning they found the body unburied. It lay on a heap of empty bottles, together with a bunch of still living but badly mangled and groaning Reds.

In the town of Orlov a communist youth organization decided to celebrate Christmas with a blasphemous revolutionary pageant on horseback. The show was staged in a theater. The horses used were those of the local fire brigade. The audience was made up of party members and their families. As the pageant started across the stage, someone sounded a fire alarm. The trained fire horses dashed into the auditorium, killing over forty men, women, and children and wounding many more.

Yenukidze used these two incidents to illustrate the abyss that separated the ruling Bolsheviks from the people. He was one of the few big men in Moscow who abhorred the practice of hiding Russia's troubles behind a façade of Marxian phrases which nine-tenths of the party, let alone the people, could not understand. He was frank, fearless, and incapable of fanatic adherence to any group. He was never heard to laud either Lenin or Marx in superlatives, let alone the lesser lights. To the pressing problems of the day he had a common-sense approach. Like Rykov, he believed that nearly all Soviet troubles stemmed from Lenin's fundamental error in counting on a quick world revolution.

"When this failed to materialize," he said, "it was up to us to uncook the *kasha*. Our concessions in rural Russia amounted to actual, though not formal, private ownership. And once we let the peasant till his own strip of land, we should have given the light industry back to its owners."

Yenukidze assured me that had Lenin lived a few years

longer, he would have brought NEP to its logical conclusion, and Russia would long since have been on its way to evolutionary instead of revolutionary socialism. Lenin, he believed, was the only leader who could have corrected the error of 1917. His prestige was too great for any of his disciples to oppose him on a major issue.

An admirer of Trotsky, Yenukidze felt that the hero of October had been losing ground ever since Lenin fell ill. The Kremlin had become a hotbed of political intrigue, and at this game Stalin had no equal; Trotsky was by nature and training a poor hand at it. The wartime leader missed his great chance in 1924 when he had a general staff ready to obey his command and an army eager to follow him. Towards the end of that year he was no longer undisputed master of the situation, but he still had a large following ready to fight in a popular cause. Trotsky's unwillingness to join hands with the Rights, Yenukidze thought, was due to his almost pathological fear that they would destroy Russia as a base of world revolution. Rather than risk such an event, he seemed now willing to align himself with his utterly discredited former enemies Zinoviev and Kamenev.

In seeing me to the door, Yenukidze speculated on Trotsky's next move. Would he come to an understanding with the Rights and champion a popular cause? Or would he persist in his day-dreams of world revolution?

Chapter 15

The Mechanics of Terror

WEEKS HAD GONE BY SINCE MY talk with Yenukidze, and there was still no word in the Soviet press about the trouble in the party. Nevertheless, little by little rumors about new tension in high quarters began to spread. It could be heard in the growing queues of people waiting endlessly before bakeries and food stores. It was common gossip at the Literary Club, in restaurants, hotels, at intimate parties. It was whispered when the Black Marias were again heard screeching their way up Lubianka at all hours of the day and night. Obviously the tide of persecution in the countryside was finally reaching the capital. Again, as in 1924, the victims of the terror were not as yet the Trotskyists, but the so-called *Lishentsi*, a newly coined name for Nepmen. The exact meaning of the word—"deprived ones"—made it a fitting term for men and women torn from their homes and shorn of all human rights.

A new feature in this wave of horror was railway terminals crowded with *Lishentsi*. Crestfallen, hungry, and in rags, thousands of men, women, and children sat or stood around waiting for freight trains to carry them far from their homes, relatives, and friends, far from beloved Moscow where many were born, some of whom could trace their ancestry centuries back. This cruel punishment was particularly hard on the children and also on the many adolescents who, despite the Soviet propaganda,

chose to share the lot of their parents and go with them to some unknown destination. From a round of visits to the backyards of Moscow's railway stations I came away overcome by the pitiful sight of mass suffering. At the October terminal I stood for hours watching Chekists load victims on a freight train. Though many of them were well-to-do Nepmen, they were brought to the station stripped of nearly all their belongings. Administrative arrest carried with it confiscation of all property, including what the brutal Chekists considered "excess" food and clothing. As a result of this systematic loot most of the prisoners were in rags and were famished.

Winter was nearly gone, but the nights were still cold and the fields covered with snow. Notwithstanding this, the prisoners were being packed into unheated boxcars which would likely become death traps as the train moved deeper into the frost-bound Siberian wastes.

As the tide of terror mounted, Muscovites became aware of a new breed of sadists, worse even than the professional Chekists. They were the communist youth shock brigadiers mobilized by the Apparat to help the GPU *razgrusit* (unload) Moscow of an estimated one hundred thousand outlawed citizens. On instructions from Stalin's headquarters these brigadiers went through Moscow's homes in search of suspects. No one was safe. A visiting card or a notebook with names and addresses found on an arrested person could bring catastrophe upon his friends or mere acquaintances.

Personal grievances and old scores were being settled by arrest. The refusal of women to submit to the advances of degenerates among the shock brigadiers was known to result in the arrest and exile of entire families. There were no legal safeguards; victims were helpless. There were cases of entire families committing suicide while waiting for the prison trains. These tragedies, far from restraining the Apparat, served only to whet its appetite. During one terrible night special detachments made up of Chekists and shock brigadiers went through homes, arresting over ten thousand Muscovites. The event,

though unmentioned in the press, shook the city with the force of an earthquake. Few families in Moscow escaped the effects of that pogrom, which was obviously designed to frighten the whole population. After that night no one in Moscow felt safe from the Apparat's fury. Not a word had as yet been published about the new split in the party, but Stalin had prepared the way for it by putting the whole country into a state of panic.

Mass terror, if skillfully manipulated, soon reaches a point where most people feel physically and mentally paralyzed. They become utterly despondent and spiritually disarmed. Worst of all, they begin to suspect one another of being spies and *provocateurs*. The time comes when few can meet without suspecting one another of espionage. A casual remark, an inadvertent gesture may ruin a long and intimate friendship. Panic often destroys even the devotion of home and family. In such an atmosphere conspiratorial underground resistance becomes ever more difficult. The dictator can then proceed in the manner of a surgeon in the operating room. His patient is prostrate, his staff awed by his presence and submissive. He may do what he will without fear of retaliation, for he has succeeded in engineering a mass resignation to fate.

Long before he is ready to strike down a foe, Stalin takes pains to isolate him in a spiritual vacuum. The victim, with few exceptions, eagerly grasps at mere life, oblivious of ideals, honor, or chivalry. There is little room for lofty principles in a land lorded over by a gang of assassins whose chief operational slogan is "the end justifies all means."

Adhering to this line of conduct, Stalin paved the way for his final onslaught on Trotsky. In doing this he was again trampling down the helpless, inarticulate, disorganized masses. It was they who paid with their life's blood for every move of the ideological gangster on his way to absolute power.

During this period of panic I, like other foreigners in Moscow, went about in a widening vacuum of social isolation. Some friends vanished; others, though still in Moscow, kept away. Meeting me on the street, they would furtively explain that it

would be best for me "not to recognize them" for a while.

Still, there were Russians who continued to visit me unmolested. Many of them were Rights; others, Trotskyists like Sasha. The feeling of security among the Rights was understandable—they were still in charge of the government. But how was one to explain the almost total, if only temporary, immunity of Trotskyists? Beginning in winter, and throughout the spring and early summer of 1926, they were busily engaged in printing and distributing illegal leaflets. In some they called Stalin the "Tsar of the kulaks." In others they accused the Rights of hatching a "counterrevolutionary conspiracy." Unable to hire halls, they would hold clandestine meetings in one-room apartments. Some of these meetings took place at 23 Bolshaya Dmitrovka, where The Associated Press had its Moscow headquarters. The head of our house committee, who whispered this news into my ear, admitted that in fear of punishment for silence he regularly reported it all to the GPU. But the GPU did not seem to mind.

"The meetings," he said with surprise, "go on as before."

About the same time there came persistent reports of unsuppressed strikes. What was behind this laxity of the police in the midst of a general panic? For a time there seemed to be no adequate answer. Even some of Stalin's close friends were baffled. Some believed that he was determined not to violate a deathbed promise to Lenin to safeguard life within the party. Others explained it by Stalin's fear of a Red Army still devoted to Trotsky. People more realistic about the situation were satisfied that Stalin was deliberately provoking his foes in order to expose their clandestine activities and thus prove to the men in the government that the Trotskyist movement had reached the proportions of an actual counterrevolutionary menace and must be dealt with summarily.

Those advancing this view pointed to the utter impossibility of clandestine printing in a country where all machinery and paper were in the hands of the Apparatus. They pointed out that in a capital honeycombed with spies and *provocateurs* there could be no secret meetings without the active participation of

undercover men from the Apparat, that is, agents assigned to draw out the foe in order to destroy him.

As yet, Stalin was still far from being undisputed master of Russia. He still had to justify his every major move in face of growing resistance from the Right. He knew too well that further progress towards a one-man dictatorship depended on his ability to keep his actual and potential foes separated until he could face them all with a special armed force at his command. At the moment, his newly organized military police amounted to no more than a few widely scattered regiments, but he was working fast and hard. Few people realize when they speak of Russia's enormous police army that it was this army which enabled Stalin to head off any effort of his opponents to save Russia from his despotic rule. Only military force could settle this issue, and Stalin had the advantage of always thinking in terms of force. At the time I speak of he was proceeding cautiously, patiently, methodically, and shrewdly, always on the alert against a united front, always in mortal fear of an understanding between Lefts and Rights. They were both doomed, he knew, if they persisted in going separate ways until he had his privileged police army ready.

During this terrorist wave some relatives and friends of the victims came to me for help. In the years past, men like Yagoda, Prokofiev, and others had given such help at my request in cases where there was no doubt about the innocence of those arrested. It was different now. When I came to Yagoda the day after the mass raids he threw up his hands.

"All I do these days," he said, "is obey orders from the Apparat!"

Prokofiev explained that the lists of those to be arrested were being made up in the Party Secretariat and that neither Yagoda, Prokofiev, nor any other member of the GPU Collegium had any discretion in the matter. Menzhinsky, then formal head of the GPU, was a mere figurehead and was gravely ill.

I turned to Rykov. He told me that the Rights in the Polit-

buro had moved to prevent the Apparat from further usurpation of the functions of government, but sporadic strikes led by Trotskyists had compelled a temporary delay. For the moment the Soviet Premier, like Yagoda and Prokofiev, was unable to intervene.

I gave up in despair. I could do little more than try to explain to people why I was helpless. This went on until one night when a friend from *Izvestia* got me out of bed. A revolutionary tribunal, he informed me, was about to hand out severe sentences to a hundred-odd private bankers and their employees.

These men, who had been financiers before the Revolution, had been operating again under a banking law enacted in 1924. In compliance with that law they had formed an association, raised some capital, and organized a bank which for several years had been doing business with Nepmen. That afternoon a detachment of Apparatchiks had raided the place, arrested everybody on the premises, and rushed them off to trial before a revolutionary tribunal. The trial had been under way for several hours and was likely to last all night, as the judges had orders to act quickly. The court, my friend told me, was under heavy guard, and he was afraid to go with me. But he had made arrangements with the commander of the guard to let me pass. Coverage for the foreign press was out of the question. What the *Izvestia* man had in mind was that I visit Yenukidze immediately after the trial and plead for mercy. This being a court trial, the sentence could not be carried out without confirmation by the All-Russian Executive, of which Yenukidze was the secretary. The Rights, my friend pointed out, were still in charge of the government and the judiciary. With their help Yenukidze, if properly approached, could prevent what seemed to be a massacre in the making.

It was nearly three o'clock in the morning when I reached the court. I was met by a young officer who must have been a friend of the *Izvestia* man, for he saluted smiling and led the way into a poorly lighted room jammed with soldiers and civilians. The soldiers, armed with rifles and bayonets, stood around in lines

and circles, forming a strange, confusing pattern. I took my place on a long bench beyond the railing and directly in front of the vacant judiciary dais. Behind the railing stretched a solid line of soldiery.

Occupying the same bench on either side of me were sedate, dignified, well-dressed men. At first sight they impressed me as lawyers. Their large number seemed warranted by the long list of defendants. At a table on the left I noticed three or four Soviet newsmen. No foreign correspondent was in sight. I approached the *Pravda* reporter for details. The man, always friendly, pleaded ignorance. He was jittery and seemed anxious to avoid talking about the trial. On my way back to the bench I heard an attendant yell: "The Court is coming." All present snapped out of their seats and stood at attention as three men in Red Army uniforms, armed with revolvers, mounted the judge's dais.

The one in the middle announced without any preliminaries that the tribunal had found twenty-seven of the defendants guilty of counterrevolutionary acts aimed at disrupting the Soviet economy and finance. They were accordingly sentenced to the "highest form of social defense"—shooting. The rest of the accused, though guilty of the same crime, were subordinates, he said, and therefore subject to lesser penalties. They were sentenced to exile for five to ten years. He then proceeded to read the names and social origin of those about to die. In each case of extreme penalty, bourgeois ancestry appeared to be the outstanding item of guilt. Twenty-seven times the armed dispensers of Stalinist justice repeated the phrase: "Defendant, son of bourgeois parents, etc."

The one humane rule prevailing in Soviet courts in those days was permission for the defendants and their lawyers to smoke. The same rule applied to places of execution. As the judge proceeded to read the long list of names and penalties, I saw people light their cigarettes. All over the courtroom, one by one, men began to smoke. They inhaled deeply and exhaled with an expression of relief after long suspense. Soon the court became misty with smoke.

I had no clear idea of the location of the prisoners, but judging by the rapidly growing number of smokers nearly every civilian present was a defendant. The presence of women in a roped-off space in the rear indicated that that section was reserved for relatives. Whatever doubts I might have had on that score were dispelled by their wailing and weeping.

"But where are the prisoners?" I asked my neighbor on the right. I turned to him feeling quite sure that he was one of the lawyers.

"The prisoners?" he echoed. His voice sounded as hollow as though coming from a well. He turned slightly and stared at me with two coal-black eyes. He was a handsome, well-groomed, powerfully built man in his forties. His face was ghastly pale.

"Who are you?" he asked. I told him.

His eyes filled with tears. They came rolling down his face, wetting his clothes. He tried hard to say something, but the tears made speech difficult. Finally, after an effort at self-control, he said:

"I am one of the twenty-seven. All of us on this bench are sentenced to death."

The judge was still reading from his voluminous document. He read in a monotonous tone, undisturbed by the moans, sobs, and cries which now came from every corner of the courtroom. A few seats to the right a very old man, who had been smoking incessantly, fell in a faint and was carried out amid cries of anguish. The presiding jurist stopped reading while the court was cleared of friends and relatives. In the midst of all this confusion I was trying to comfort my neighbor. I told him not to give up hope. An appeal to Yenukidze was still possible. His face brightened at the mention of that name. I promised to see Yenukidze before the night was over. "Can I tell that to my friends?" he asked. I told him to go ahead.

Before the judge finished reading his verdict I was out on the street, hailing an izvozchik.

It was nearly five in the morning when I reached the Kremlin gate. With my Foreign Office credential in hand, I told the sentries that I wished to see Comrade Yenukidze on urgent business.

"At this hour of the night?" asked one.

Another glanced at my paper. "But he's asleep."

I asked permission to telephone the commissar. The sentries were suspicious. They went into a huddle and finally decided to call the commandant of the guard.

The commandant, though he had seen me on previous visits to the Kremlin, hesitated.

"At such an hour?" he gasped.

"At once," I insisted. "The thing cannot wait!"

"Very well, then," he finally agreed. "I shall phone Comrade Yenukidze and wake him up. But remember, I am doing this on your responsibility."

A minute later the officer emerged from the booth holding the receiver. "Comrade Yenukidze will talk to you," he said. Over the telephone I heard my good friend laughing.

"The sentries are in a panic. Come on up."

Yenukidze knew all about the trial. His reaction was characteristic of his whole noble life. He told me that he had been watching the case and was determined to do all in his power to save those men, who were the victims of sheer sadism. He assured me, before I asked the question, that they had been doing business under a law that was still on the statute books.

"In normal times," said Yenukidze, "I could act in a case like this without consulting anyone. But now I shall have to see Josif Vissarionovich. All the same you have my word, those men will not be shot."

Two days later the All-Russian Central Executive commuted the twenty-seven death sentences to ten years in prison.

Chapter 16

Trotsky's Bungling and Stalin's Skill

STALIN HAD GOOD REASON FOR delaying the public announcement of his new feud with Trotsky. He was waiting for the outcome of Trotsky's negotiations with Zinoviev and Kamenev, their widely rumored attempt to unite in an anti-Stalinist block.

Stalin was aware that he could not liquidate the Trotskyists along with the "deprived" Nepmen so long as Trotsky was still the living symbol of military victory. It would rouse millions of the former War Commissar's devoted followers, both within and without the party. The thing to do was to drag the hero off his pedestal. This difficult task would be made easy if Trotsky were to unite with these two widely discredited leaders, who in 1924 had demanded his arrest and expulsion from the party.

A Trotsky-Zinoviev-Kamenev bloc seemed absolutely unthinkable to the millions of devoted Trotskyists. But Stalin, an acute observer of men, had reason to believe that this supposedly uncompromising leader was capable of unprincipled maneuvers. He had evidence of it in Trotsky's disavowal of Max Eastman's book *Since Lenin Died*, with its revelation that Lenin's last letter to the party had demanded the removal of Stalin as General Sec-

retary. The concealment of this all-important document—called “Lenin’s Testament”—had been widely rumored long before Lenin was laid to rest. Eastman’s book, simultaneously published in London, Paris, and New York, confirmed the rumor. It quoted, with essential accuracy, the vital sentences of the testament. Stalin, who had the book translated almost overnight, demanded, on pain of disciplinary action by the party, that Trotsky disavow the author and deny that such a document as Lenin’s Testament existed. For some time the matter hung fire, and everybody assumed that Trotsky must be grateful to Eastman for revealing not only the testament but the conspiracy of the troika—Stalin, Kamenev, and Zinoviev—against him after Lenin’s death. Trotsky’s disavowal of Eastman’s book shocked those who looked to him for leadership. A year later Eastman published the complete text of the testament, and subsequently Stalin himself acknowledged its existence and quoted from it. Trotsky in exile “disavowed his disavowal” and published a letter endorsing and praising Max Eastman in highest terms. But that was long after. At the time, I remember a conversation with Yenukidze about this act of weakness.

“Trotsky was not alone,” he said, “in telling this lie as a matter of party discipline. Lenin’s wife Krupskaya joined him in it. But Krupskaya is not an idol as Trotsky is. An idol must never step down from his pedestal. If he does, his glory may be dimmed forever.”

After this public betrayal of a friend, it did not seem improbable to Stalin that Trotsky might join hands with men whom he and his followers despised. Trotsky committed this grave error in April 1926; and Stalin was not slow to exploit it. Through his controlled media of press and platform, he informed the public that Trotsky was again on the warpath against Lenin’s party, bolstered now by a formidable “cabal of anti-Leninists.” This demanded a campaign of “enlightenment,” which consisted of the publication of old compromising truths, half-truths, and newly invented outright lies. Apparatus columnists recalled Trotsky’s quarrels with Lenin. They brought up Kamenev’s

telegram to the Grand Duke Michael congratulating the late Tsar's brother on his accession to the throne. Again and again Stalin's feature writers reminded Kamenev and Zinoviev of their crime of opposing the insurrection in October 1917. There followed a flood of quotations from speeches and writings in which the rebels had at one time or another abused Lenin or ridiculed his theories. The quotes were taken at random and out of context. The rebels countered with underground pamphlets in which they were soon demanding the publication of Lenin's suppressed testament—so recently declared to be nonexistent. The net result of this combat of quotations was to befog the plain truth that the factions were fighting for control of the party machine unconcerned by the growing plight of the people.

At the beginning of the long struggle, the foreign correspondents, hedged in by tightened rules of censorship, could do little more than tell the story as it appeared in the Soviet press. It was useless to read the underground handouts of the opposition. It was a waste of time to cover their meetings, held in stuffy, unventilated apartments in winter, in forests during the summer. From Trotsky down, the rebels were eager to have their side of the story told abroad, and in furtive ways they kept in touch with foreign newsmen, urging them to counteract Stalin's foreign propaganda. But little came of it. There was no way of circumventing the censor unless one wanted to leave Russia.

In one respect the underground movement against Stalin was similar to that under the Tsar: it was not really secret. No competent observer could doubt for a moment that the rebels were under the constant surveillance of Stalin's spies. There was good ground to believe also that his *provocateurs* were active among them. It was common gossip that the underground "Trotskyist Politburo" and other rebel outfits were promoted by Stalin's machinations, designed to facilitate closer observation. After covering a few Trotskyist meetings with Sasha, I learned from an authoritative source that we were being shadowed. The source was Yagoda, who telephoned to warn me that Sasha

would be in trouble unless we two stayed away from such meetings.

In the spring of 1927 the Rights gained unexpected strength. It came from the countryside, where millions of peasants went on strike in retaliation for the ravages of GPU execution squads. As if by tacit agreement they refused to go into the fields unless the government called a halt to repression and supplied them with rural essentials. At the same time the peasants overwhelmed their sons in the Red Army with letters of woe and protest. Things reached a pass where even War Commissar Voroshilov, a henchman of Stalin, felt compelled to read many of those letters before the Politburo.

More than ever now the Rights were concerned not only with freedom within the ruling party but also with basic human rights for the whole country. They renewed their demand that Stalin put an end to this new wave of terror and were successful in compelling it sooner than he wished. Moreover, at both the April and July meetings of the Central Committee they demanded and secured a full and frank debate on all the issues then facing the country. Of still greater importance was Stalin's yielding to a demand by Rykov to publicize the proceedings. Thus everybody knew that at both meetings delegates from industrial districts reminded the leaders that while Russia was preparing to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Revolution, many Soviet workers were still living in vermin-infested barracks where the allotted living space for each worker was "about the size of a coffin."

At the April session of the Central Committee, Health Commissar Semashko told the delegates that Russia's nine million shelterless children were a "living reproach to its conscience." At the same conference Lenin's widow Krupskaya revealed that most of these children were no longer the heritage of the civil war but came from homes ravaged by the GPU.

Ryazanov, the widely respected head of the Marx and Engels Institute, stunned the delegates by saying: "There are certain categories of Soviet workers whose wages are 110 per cent

above their prerevolutionary earnings, yet they live 100 per cent below the level of existence that can be called human."

Dzerzhinsky, founder of the GPU, told the delegates: "When I look at our Apparat, as well as at our incredible bureaucracy, I am literally horrified." But he also denounced the Trotskyists, saying that their chief concern in the midst of this widespread misery was to intrigue for power. He bitterly attacked Trotsky's demand for a higher tax levy on the peasants.

"True," he said, "our hundred million peasants have saved four hundred million rubles—four rubles apiece—and with this Comrade Trotsky proposes to build a Soviet industry!"

Towards the end of his speech the founder of the Cheka warmed up to the point of threatening the opposition with shot and shell. It was his last public appearance. He died immediately after leaving the platform.

Stalin went into temporary seclusion after Dzerzhinsky's death. He kept his peace for the rest of that summer. But early in the autumn he hit on a clever diversion. Without any preliminaries, he announced a "popular proletarian debate on Trotskyism." By way of refuting the charge of a one-man dictatorship, he let it be known that the Soviet workers would actually decide the issue in their resolutions to be adopted at each meeting. It was a clever move, one to which the Rights, as champions of Soviet democracy, could take no exception.

The announcement of the debate was followed up with a campaign of renewed slander in the press, calculated to goad the rebels into appearing before hostile, indifferent, or terrorized crowds to answer the charges.

Many of Trotsky's friends advised him to stay away from these meetings. But *provocateurs* were on hand to urge him to lay his case before the "proletarian tribunal of last resort." Unheeding friendly counsel, Trotsky and his followers walked into the trap. They found that the "tribunal of last resort" was a gang of Stalin's roughnecks determined that they should not be heard. Everywhere their appearance on platforms was greet-

ed with yells, catcalls, and riots skillfully engineered by men from the Apparatus who, under instructions from the Secretary, raced from hall to hall and from factory to factory.

After a week of this "proletarian debate," all Moscow knew that the Trotskyists were near the end of their rope. Nowhere had any of them got a chance to speak his mind. Everywhere they had been yelled at, yanked, and pushed off the platform. Everywhere flying wedges from the Apparatus had been busy breaking up meetings.

The majority of workers, having lived through years of terror, were in no mood to defend the rebels. A temporary increase in rations coupled with a promise of better living quarters lulled most of them into a state of apathy. The Trotskyists' long-winded Marxian arguments fell on deaf ears.

At a meeting in the factory "Red October," I saw Trotsky hissed, spat at, and all but kicked off the very platform where he had once been hailed as savior of the Revolution. Watching this revolutionary leader humiliated and helpless, I recalled the scene of his triumph at the Moscow soviet. The ovation he had received the previous summer seemed now like a dream. In less than a year the hero of the people had become an object of pity. Thanks to his errors and to the astuteness of his enemy, his prestige was destroyed.

The riots in Soviet factories, though provoked by Stalinist gangsters, were used as a pretext to suppress the opposition. Larin, one of Stalin's chief spokesmen, openly warned them that unless they submitted to party discipline the issue would be settled with machine guns. The Rights were worried. In an effort to prevent bloodshed, Yenukidze, Rykov, Bukharin, Tomsky, and others made desperate efforts to arrive at an understanding with Trotsky, but for ethical reasons they were unwilling to deal with Zinoviev and Kamenev. Resentful of this insult to his unprincipled friends, Trotsky took another long step on the road to ruin. He decided to negotiate directly with Stalin, whose emissaries assured him that he and the other leaders of the opposition would be dealt with "humanely." The first

seeds of an intrigue against the Rights were planted at these unholy peace talks between the blind fanatics and the unprincipled schemers.

As a consequence, in the beginning of 1927 it began to look as though strife within the party was a thing of the past. Officially there was peace on Soviet earth and contentment in the Apparat. But as the year advanced, it became increasingly evident that this hastily patched up *mariage de convenance* was no cure for Russia's deperately sick economy. In the tenth year of the Revolution, Russia's prerevolutionary reserves were almost gone and its industry was reaching the point of exhaustion. The situation in the countryside was going from bad to worse. After a brief lull in the terror, there was renewed agitation against the "murderous kulaks," who as if by common agreement resumed the massacre of village correspondents—also of officials sent to the country to "buy" grain at arbitrary prices for the army and for industrial workers. It was a repetition of the previous year's troubles, but on a much larger scale. Soon the shortage of food was felt in Moscow's barracks and factories. And again, as in every crisis, the city seethed with rumors of strikes and riots.

In these circumstances the Rights renewed their agitation for wider economic and political concessions at home and abroad. The Trotskyists, after months of adherence to their agreement to "behave," became restive again. Always on the alert for some weak spot in Stalin's armor, they were quick to exploit his high-handed policy in China which resulted in the massacre of many Chinese Communists. On that occasion they succeeded in circulating an anti-Stalinist protest signed by eighty-three leading Bolsheviks. It began to look again as though they might reach out for power. Their steadily mounting volume of illegal printing, coupled with a temporary silence of the Apparat, gave rise to rumors of a newly forged anti-Stalinist bloc which included the Rights. At the Foreign Office there was guarded talk of "tremendous" developments in the making. Rykov and Yenukidze would neither confirm nor deny the rumors, but their mood seemed to have improved since the end of winter. It

looked as though Stalin, blinded by an excess of power, had made some fatal mistake and was about to pay the penalty.

At that time two events put an abrupt end to all such hopes. In May 1927 the British Government, after raiding the Soviet Trade Delegation in London, broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Shortly thereafter Warsaw flashed the news of the assassination of the Soviet Ambassador Voykov. Within a day the Apparatus was hard at work whipping up a war scare. With his inborn taste for terror, Stalin began by executing twenty former aristocrats, including old Prince Dolgorukov. All of them were mere shadows of a dead past. Few Muscovites had any doubt about their innocence. But their execution touched off one of those chain reactions to which Russia had become accustomed under Stalin. The capital rocked with rumors of wholesale arrests and administrative executions. At the same time there was persistent talk that the murder in Warsaw had been planned in Moscow. It was the timing of it that gave rise to these rumors. The killing of the ambassador came just in time to prevent a showdown with Stalin. For weeks preceding Voykov's death Stalin had been on the defensive, but the next day he had the Soviet capital in a state of total panic and was loudly accusing Trotsky and his followers of treason. Whatever progress may have been made in forging an anti-Stalinist front was thus wiped out overnight.

During the preceding lull in party strife I had discussed the situation with Yagoda. Like others at the top, he believed that "radical adjustments" in the Apparatus were imminent. But the day after the murder of Voykov he was a changed man. He drank heavily and seemed anxious to avoid all talk about the event. Earlier in the evening I had visited the Literary Club where pro-Trotskyist sentiment ran high at the time. It was there that rumors of the Apparatus's connection with the Voykov murder first reached me. I told Yagoda what I had heard and saw his face tighten. He leaned close, saying: "Vladimir Isakovich, as a friend I must advise you to avoid all such talk. The way things look to me, we are on the verge of war." This

was the new line, then: WAR! What could be more timely than a wave of terror based on the assassination of a Soviet Ambassador and the threat of foreign attack.

Now Stalin devised new methods to convince the country of its imminent peril. One of them was Cheka raids on trains, boats, and other means of conveyance. On my way to Leningrad one night I was witness to what the chief conductor called a "routine checkup"—a proceeding that left hundreds of men and women frantic with fear. An hour out of Moscow the train was stopped and boarded by a detachment of officers, soldiers, and armed civilians. They went through the coaches, ordering people off their bunks and subjecting everyone to a search of wearing apparel and baggage. Many of the passengers had no identity papers. They were removed from the train and placed under arrest in a roped-off space on the platform.

For some time I stood at the window of my compartment watching this procedure. Children were in terror, their mothers hysterical. Men pleaded in vain to be allowed to proceed with the train. There was no violence; just machinelike obedience of soldiers to their commander.

The conductor, who had taken my Foreign Office credential, came to inform me that he had shown it to the officer in charge of the raid and that everything was in order. A few minutes later he returned with the officer, a tall man armed with a long curved sword and a big Browning. The man saluted with a friendly smile and hastened to assure me that he had no intention of searching my baggage. "But I must share your compartment," he added. "The conductor tells me there is no other vacancy in the *wagon-lit*. I am going to Leningrad."

I was strongly tempted to ask: "Why not take one of the many bunks left vacant by those you've arrested?" But one look at his side weapons and I stepped aside to let him in.

He unbuckled his belt, unbuttoned his tunic, and rang for the waiter. "Vodka and zakuski!" he ordered, "and bring two plates and glasses." It was an implied invitation to a party, an invitation, moreover, which I could not refuse without offense

to a heavily armed Chekist. We sat up nibbling and drinking for hours. The Chekist disliked his job and said he had had enough of it. The raid on the train had come to him as a surprise; it was carried out on direct orders from the secretariat of the party.

"So we are in for another war," he said, "and we just got through fighting one."

He had served on all the fronts in the civil war, had been gravely wounded, and had been awarded the order of the Red Banner.

"Yes, I have seen sights," he said. "It was always Russian killing Russian. White or Red, we were of the same flesh and blood. But once having got into the habit of killing each other, there was no stopping us."

The Chekist went on to tell me of an execution carried out under his command. When they brought the condemned to a clearing in the woods, he and his men were dead tired after a sleepless night. So were the condemned. On the way over they all chatted freely—he, the privates, and those about to die. Each one of the doomed had a last word for someone back home. They were all smoking the few cigarettes allowed for prisoners.

"When we finally got to the spot," said the officer. "I pitied the poor devils so that I had no heart to give the command. For some time I stood there hoping they would run into the woods and spare me the trouble. I was really tired of this killing business, and so were my men. I could see it in their eyes, in their lagging step, in the manner in which they held their guns. We all wanted to save the prisoners, but each of us feared the others. Finally one of the prisoners stepped over and asked me to give him a cigarette. I gave one to each man and watched them smoke. They took their time. I can not tell you how painful it was to watch them cling to those butts. Yet when they were through I gave the command. It was my last execution. And now, it seems, we are to start all over again."

Listening to the officer, I recalled Yagoda's similar line of

talk. None of them, it seemed, were born killers. They were parts of a monstrous fear-driven machine that spared no one.

On my return to Moscow I learned that nearly all Russians suspected of contacts with the English were under arrest. Most of them were being held in administrative custody, and some were about to be tried for treason. Among these were the two Pruve brothers, sons of a former millionaire industrialist who, like the textile tycoon Morozov, had sympathized with the Bolsheviks before the Revolution and had spent a good part of his fortune financing the underground. For this reason the young Pruves felt safe with the Soviet power. Krassin, the chief financier of the bolshevik underground, was still there to attest the good done by old Pruve to Lenin and his followers. But gratitude, a virtue in the early days of the Revolution, was now a thing of the past. The Pruves were accused of counterespionage for the British, and they were marked for trial before a revolutionary tribunal.

About a week before the trial a friend of the younger Pruve asked me to intervene. He reminded me of the young man's intimacy with Jimmy Mills. I remembered meeting him at Jimmy's. He was a quiet, cultured man in his twenties, a fairly good pianist. He eked out a poor livelihood by playing the piano at parties and, from time to time, at the British Embassy. It occurred to me that Krassin would be the man to help them, but unfortunately Krassin was away at the time. In his absence I took the matter up with Yenukidze and Yagoda. Both said they were helpless. The war scare seemed to have taken hold even here. Yagoda's only suggestion was that I talk to the prosecutor, whom he instructed over the telephone to receive me.

The prosecutor, an affable young man, informed me that there were four defendants in the case: the two Pruve brothers, their brother-in-law, and a Red Army officer who had already confessed selling military documents to the Pruves—documents which he alleged they had delivered to the British military attaché in Moscow.

He offered to have the younger Pruve brought to his office

so that I might talk with him. I sensed an attempt to enlist my help in securing a confession. They brought in the prisoner and left the two of us alone.

The young man assured me in tears of his innocence. "Before God I swear to you that the accusations against me are false. I have never seen this Red officer and never so much as looked at a secret military document. For some reason they want me and my brother to lie, but our minds are made up. We would rather die than bear false witness against ourselves and our friends."

I listened to poor Pruve as one who was bound hand and foot might listen to the cries of a drowning man. I watched his pale, drawn, tearstained face, unable to hold back my own sobs. Like the prisoner seen on my first visit to the GPU, he became for me a symbol of the martyred Russian people. With all my being I wanted to save him. Yet I could not bring myself to tell him that his one chance to live was to confess and involve others. In parting I promised to see if I could do anything with Rykov.

I talked to the Premier that same day, pleading the man's innocence, reminding Rykov of old Pruve's generous help to Lenin in the Tsarist underground. He promised to take the matter up with the authorities in charge, but he added: "I hope you realize that this war talk makes it very difficult to intervene." The next day Rykov's secretary informed me that it was a case of military espionage and that the confession of one of the defendants (the Red Army officer) made intervention impossible.

Within a week the Pruve brothers, their brother-in-law, and the officer were tried before a revolutionary tribunal. The trial began in the evening and lasted nearly all night. I was in court from beginning to end. Most of the time was taken up with the officer's detailed confession. The brothers denied all guilt. So did their brother-in-law.

After brief deliberation the tribunal brought in a verdict: the Red Army man was sentenced to two years in prison by reason of his "confession and proletarian descent." The Pruves and

their relative were condemned to death without the right of appeal. They all waved to me as they were being surrounded by guards. I waved back and saw the younger Pruve in tears. Always boyish-looking, he now had the appearance of a stricken child. With slow steps, his whole frame shaken by a paroxysm of sobbing, he followed the officer of the guard towards an open door in the rear of the courtroom. At the threshold he turned and again waved to me with both hands. The guards did not interfere. As always in Soviet courtrooms they behaved humanely. Pruve opened his mouth and moved his lips as if trying to say something. From the distance I caught only some faint, disconnected syllables. I tried hard to make out what the doomed man was saying. Was it a farewell to Jimmy Mills whom he adored, or was it a last protestation of innocence? The next moment he was gone. In full view of the judges, who were still on the platform, I broke down and wept. A deadly hush settled over the half-empty courtroom. It reminded me of a stage after the show when some actors still linger in the shadows.

I looked at the judges, at an attendant putting out the lights, at two civilians on a bench. They all had the appearance of men who understood and sympathized with the condemned. Why was it, then? Why did these men with hearts and souls send an inoffensive boy to his death? Again this whole complex situation seemed to me like a monstrous machine which, once set in motion, could not be stopped even by those who designed and made it. That night on my way home through Moscow's desolate streets I asked myself for the hundredth time: What would the honest, cultured sympathizers with communism the world over think if they could see all this with their own eyes? And what would the founders of socialism, Marx and Engels, say if they could rise from their graves and take a good look at the result of a ten-year experiment with their theories? Again, as on many previous occasions, I remembered my youthful day-dreams of revolution and was appalled by the nightmarish reality.

An Invitation from the Soviet Military Counterintelligence

IN THE FALL OF 1927, I WAS APPOINTED chief of The Associated Press Bureau in Moscow. The appointment took place in Geneva, Switzerland, whither I was summoned to meet Kent Cooper, general manager, and Charles Stephenson Smith, then chief of the AP European Service.

At the time of my appointment, Reuters, the semiofficial British news agency, owing to the recent break in Anglo-Soviet relations, had withdrawn their correspondent from Moscow. In view of this I was instructed to file all my cabled reports via Reuters, London. This meant that I represented a major part of the Anglo-American press—a journalistic post unprecedented in the U.S.S.R. and of such outstanding importance as to command the wholesome respect of the Soviet Government. It also commanded the keen and not-so-wholesome interest of the Cheka's counterespionage service, which was always on the lookout for men in a position to render them some unique service. Its agents, the most dangerous and aggressive men on Lubyanka, were not long in casting furtive glances in my direction. Before returning to Russia I had read in the Soviet press renewed warnings of approaching war. Well-informed people in France and Switzerland scoffed at the idea of an attack on the

U.S.S.R., but on my return to Moscow I landed in a war scare bordering on hysteria. Even those who started the scare to further their political ends had wound up by believing in it. Japan, they imagined, was the enemy most likely to strike first, and everything was being done to lessen the impact of her first blow.

On paying my respects at the Kremlin I heard both the Premier and his guests predict a Japanese move within weeks, perhaps days. The British Tories, Rykov believed, were pressing Tokyo to act quickly. On the way out, Yagoda, who was one of the guests, offered to take me home in his car. Outside the Spasky gate he suggested a ride up the Leningrad highway.

"Some of our comrades have been anxiously awaiting your return," he said. "They want to talk to you about Ogato. It is a very delicate matter, so delicate that I told them I would rather see you first and get your reaction."

Ogato, the rich and influential economic attaché of the Japanese Embassy in Moscow, was my close friend. We had met at a Foreign Office reception two years back and had been intimate ever since.

"What about Ogato?" I asked, alarmed at the mere mention of his name after the war talk I had been listening to.

Yagoda hastened to assure me that there was nothing wrong with my friend. "On the contrary," he said, "the comrades of our military branch like him, and that is why they want to see you."

I looked at the Chekist, wondering what he was up to. In all of our previous contacts he had been direct and outspoken. The abrupt change in his manner was shocking, and he saw that I noticed it. In a tone of apology, he explained that the military counterespionage service was run by tough men who in emergencies acted independently of the GPU Collegium.

"But what has all this to do with me?" I asked.

"Simply this," said Yagoda. "Our counterespionage wants to confuse the Japs and weaken their initial blow. The surest way to do it is to sell them a fictitious Soviet mobilization plan. An operation of this sort requires a proper medium. Our opera-

tives couldn't think of a better one than Ogato-Reswick. They wanted to talk to you the moment you reached Moscow, but I held them off. They are tough men, accustomed to having their way. Frankly, I fear trouble unless I can make you understand that here is a rare chance to render a service to our country."

My reply was a resentful *no*. I took the occasion, besides, to remind Yagoda of Rykov's numerous efforts to abolish the GPU, and I told him I shared the Premier's abhorrence for that engine of terror, whose usefulness had come to an end with the termination of civil war. As to the danger of war with Japan, I told him what I had heard in Europe and quoted a recent statement of Chicherin's ridiculing the very idea of such trouble in the near future.

Yagoda took it all in his stride. "I hope Chicherin is right," he said, and in parting begged me to keep our talk in the strictest confidence.

A day or two later Zinaida Meyerhold Reikh telephoned to invite me to a party. She insisted that I come, holding out as bait the gypsy chorus from the Podval, the best in town. Since my first visit to the Meyerholds, their parties had come to be known as the most charming social events in Moscow, attended by the elite of artists, writers, residents of the Kremlin, with the unavoidable men from Lubianka—the well-known Chekists like Yagoda and his undercover operatives. Among the celebrities who rarely missed those affairs were the famous actress Madame Knipper, Anton Chekhov's widow, and the poet Mayakovsky. I eagerly accepted the invitation.

It was nearly two in the morning when the gypsies arrived after their performance at the Podval. By that time the guests were in that receptive mood for wistful tunes which only vodka can produce. The gypsies had no sooner begun to tune their guitars than the lights were dimmed and we all sat down to a feast of tears and laughter. Such scenes were common at social affairs in Moscow. But for the first time that night I saw a Russian who, though dead sober, wept just the same. Each time the lights went on I saw this man in an officer's uniform raise a hand-

kerchief to his eyes. While the gypsies were singing he would toy with his glass. He would raise it to his lips, swallow a bit, and put it back on the table. It was strange behavior for a Red Army man. Officers usually drank in large gulps, some of them wiping their lips with the back of their hand after each gulp.

"Who is he?" I asked Zinaida. "Aldanov,"* she whispered, "a friend of Mayakovsky and quite talented. He has just written a play about gypsies. He has known them since childhood."

When the gypsies were through with the first part of their program we all went to the buffet for refreshments. There Zinaida introduced the newcomer to her friends. As I shook hands with him I noticed his delicate features, his thin, long fingers. He was a handsome man in his thirties. His talk and manner were those of a former aristocrat.

"Strange," he said, "how those songs affect me. I can never get over a certain incident in my childhood."

And while helping himself to *zakuski* he told us how as a boy he had seen peasants chop off the right arm of a gypsy caught stealing horses. The gruesome event had occurred on his parental estate. He had known the unfortunate gypsy for some time, having visited with his parents a neighboring camp where he loved to hear the man sing.

"Every time I listen to gypsies," said Aldanov, "I can see my friend tied to a tree. A stream of blood ran from the stump of his amputated arm. The grass beneath the tree was red."

There was pity in the man's voice. Zinaida wiped a tear.

"I am simply burning to read your play," she said. "I can well imagine my role."

The party was given on a Thursday. Early on the following Sunday my friend Berns and I rode out to Meyerhold's country home twenty-eight miles from Moscow. Except in winter I was in the habit of spending Sundays with the Meyerholds. Together with a friend or two I would start out at sunrise, stay most of the day, and ride back at dusk—or on moonlit nights, much later.

* Not to be confused with the well-known novelist of the same name.

The Meyerholds were charming hosts, and they always had interesting company. In their country home one could meet Lunacharsky, Karakhan, Yenukidze, Raskolnikov, onetime head of the Art Department, and the elite of the theatrical and writing professions. But that Sunday, Zinaida had assured me, they expected no company. It was welcome news, for after a strenuous week and that all-night affair, I was yearning for a rest.

Fate had other plans. Halfway to the Meyerholds we noticed horsemen on the road ahead of us. As we came nearer I made out three cavalry officers. They wheeled and drew up along the road on the outskirts of a village. As we approached I recognized one of the men. He was Aldanov. What struck me about him was that, like his comrades, he wore the distinctive GPU uniform. At the Meyerhold party he had been dressed in the plain tunic of an army officer.

Aldanov saluted and smiled. I reined in October and faced him, numb with misgivings. It somehow came to me that the man was from the counterespionage, that he had come to the party, and was here now to take up where Yagoda had left off on our return from the Kremlin.

Without a moment's reflection I gave October the spurs. He reared and dashed up the road and through the village. My friend Berns caught up with me, and for some minutes we galloped through a cloud of dust. In the first flush of excitement I thought I had given Aldanov an answer that would make him turn back to Moscow. But presently we heard the clatter of a galloping horse. One of Aldanov's men must have taken a short cut, for we saw him rein in ahead of us at the other end of the village. He blocked the road. We gave up and came towards him at a trot.

Aldanov soon caught up with us and ordered my friend Berns to dismount. He gave this command in a ringing voice not devoid of anger. After that he became his gentle self again, smilingly suggesting that Berns "keep his comrades company" so that he and I might converse undisturbed. He then turned to me:

"Please understand, comrade, that we are here under orders. We are simply performing our duty. I have a confidential message for you from my superiors. I know I cannot compel you to listen if you don't want to. But in that case we shall have to take your friend with us. These are my orders."

The sight of Berns dismounted and flanked by two Chekists gave me pause. I agreed to listen.

"Very well, then," said Aldanov.

He instructed his men to "entertain" my friend while we two took a short ride. A few yards up the road he repeated Yagoda's request.

"But I want to make it clear," he added, "that we are not here on Comrade Yagoda's orders. If it were up to him I would not have been sent to the Meyerhold party, and I certainly would not be here. The counterintelligence, as you may know, acts independently in an emergency. We have an urgent task to perform. Bear in mind that we are not pressing you into our service. We are simply requesting a favor, which few friendly foreigners here would refuse if any of them knew Ogato as you do. And, whatever you decide, please remember our talk must remain a strict secret."

I listened as one does to a burglar pointing a gun. All the time my thoughts drifted back to Berns. A former Russian aristocrat, he was a perfect hostage—subject to summary proceedings. Though fully aware of this, and under moral compulsion to safeguard my friend's life, I sickened at the thought of taking a first step on the road to espionage. The thing to do, it seemed to me, was to play for time. In the back of my mind I was thinking that immediately upon my return to Moscow I would see Yagoda. If I could get him to call off these hounds from my friend, well and good. Otherwise I would appeal to Rykov. I asked Aldanov for a chance to think it over.

"Splendid!" said the Chekist. "It is clearly understood, then: you proceed with your friend to the Meyerholds. We return to Moscow. We hear from you by midnight."

He wheeled abruptly and galloped back to his comrades. I

stood watching Berns mount and come towards me at a trot. A former Red Army commander with a record of valor earned in the civil war, he was now pale with fright. His thin lips had a bluish tint, and his hands trembled so that he had difficulty in holding the reins. He rode the rest of the way in grim silence. Within sight of Meyerhold's home he told me that while I was talking with Aldanov the two other Chekists had told him what it was all about. He was under orders to stay away from the AP until further notice.

"Now," said Berns, "you may understand why Russians are in mortal fear of foreigners. Sooner or later we pay the price."

While listening to my friend, I was wondering whether the thing to do was to return home immediately or keep the appointment with the Meyerholds. What I wanted at the moment was a telephone. It would take hours to get back to Moscow on horse. The suburban trains ran at rare intervals. From the Meyerholds I could telephone at once. But it meant letting them in on the secret—a thing strictly forbidden by both Yagoda and Aldanov. The time was short, however, and the choice lay between submission and fight. Unable to think of submission, I decided to ignore Aldanov's warning and fight.

At the Meyerhold's gate a new surprise awaited us. Our hosts were gone. Zinaida's father had a message for us: his daughter and son-in-law had been called to Moscow unexpectedly. They had left in a hurry. Before we had time to exchange a word on this startling development Zinaida's mother cried from the porch:

"Why don't you foreigners leave us alone?"

"Don't mind her," said the kindly old man. "The word GPU frightens her. Zinaida and Meyerhold have been talking GPU all morning."

We turned from the gate and made our way back to Moscow. Evidently friends from Lubianka had warned the Meyerholds of coming trouble.

I begged Berns to come with me. I was quite sure they would not dare make an arrest at the AP headquarters. But my friend would not hear of it.

"Whatever happens," he said, "I must avoid arousing their anger. They urged me to co-operate, and they want me to stay away from the AP. To defy the counterintelligence is to court death."

On the railway square, where we said good-by, I saw Boris's tears and turned away to hide my own. Immediately on reaching home I tried to contact friends over the telephone. But "where it is thin, it tears," says the old Russian proverb. Everyone with influence was out of town for the week end. Chicherin, the only People's Commissar available, hated the GPU, avoided it like a pest, and referred all negotiations with it to his deputies.

I tried to get in touch with Rykov, Yagoda, Yenukidze, Karakhan—all without avail. Even their secretaries were away. It was eight in the evening when I finally managed to contact Rykov's secretary. He told me that the Premier was in the country working on a report to the Council of Commissars. He could not be disturbed. I pleaded urgency and finally persuaded Nyesterov to meet me at the Open Air Theater. There, after learning the facts, the secretary told me point blank: "It is a matter on which I dare not phone Comrade Rykov. I would rather you talk to him yourself tomorrow. All I can do in a situation like this is to make an appointment."

"But tomorrow may be too late."

"All the same," said Nyesterov, "I have no choice in the matter. One cannot be too careful in dealing with counterintelligence."

Like Berns and the Meyerholds, the first assistant to the head of the government was afraid of counterintelligence. Its very mention sufficed to set everybody on edge.

At midnight I was back at my telephone waiting for Aldanov's call. It came at twelve sharp, and again I asked for time.

"I will gladly grant your request," said the Chekist, "but on one condition."

"What is it?"

"You will give us a definite answer before the night is over."

I bargained for more time.

"Please listen carefully," Aldanov said, "for I shall soon be out of reach. I repeat what I have told you. I am under orders, and my orders are to have your decision tonight. If you promise, I shall give you a number where you can reach me. Otherwise, the case is out of my hands."

I hesitated and heard the officer hang up. My renewed efforts to reach him were of no avail.

Despite extreme fatigue after a day's riding I was wide awake. My one remaining hope to stop Aldanov was to contact the Vice-Commissar of the GPU, Prokofiev, who in Yagoda's absence was in charge. On numerous occasions this official had shown himself to be a man of heart and mind. He was one of the few surviving Chekists of the old school, a man to whom the GPU remained a defensive weapon against the counter-revolutionary terror. Men of this type were scrupulous in weeding out the real enemy and sparing the innocent.

Dzerzhinsky, founder of the Cheka, was reputed to be the hero of this group. Rumor had it that early in the Revolution he had established a precedent of stern justice by ordering the execution of a highly placed Chekist found guilty of raping an imprisoned noblewoman. Dzerzhinsky pardoned the woman, who was under sentence of death. With this in mind I kept on trying to locate Prokofiev. He had left home in the morning and was out on urgent business. His secretary was gone, too, but friends offered to help me find him. At two in the morning I was still at the telephone waiting to hear from them.

The doorbell rang. I went to the door and saw Berns's parents. They were both in tears. Berns was under arrest.

"The counterintelligence," whispered Mrs. Berns. Fear lurked in her eyes as she spoke the word. "For God's sake, do something. They tell me it's all up to you. You alone can save him."

I led her to a chair where she became hysterical. Old Berns, himself on the verge of collapse, tried to calm her. I had a hunch that the parents, without knowing it, were being used in a last effort to break my resistance. This was counterintelligence's

final move, and it seemed to me a demonstration of weakness rather than strength.

Obviously, both the arrest of Berns and the tears of the old couple were meant to secure my consent before I had time to appeal higher up. I assured my panicky guests that their son would be free in a day or two.

"Be calm," I told them. "Those Chekists are only subordinates. They are not the government. The only way you can help me free Boris is to go home and let me get some sleep."

As they were about to leave, old Berns leaned close and whispered: "They brought us in their car as far as the corner. I believe they are waiting for us."

This added bit of information turned my hunch into certainty. Plainly those Chekists were trying to bluff me into hasty action. The thing to do was to call their bluff.

Considerably relieved, I told the maid Manya to wake me at eight, and stretched out on the sofa fully dressed. I saw Manya turn off the light and heard her walk away. Suddenly, the sound of heavy steps came from the corridor. Someone knocked on the door. I heard Manya say, "He is asleep," and turned on the light in time to see two uniformed men enter the parlor. They were Aldanov's friends. One of them, a powerfully built man, turned to Manya who stood at the door, trembling.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"A servant."

"A servant!" he roared laughing. "You look to me more like a mistress. But whoever you are, get the hell out of this house and stay out."

The girl ran in a panic. The Chekist closed the door behind him and drew his revolver. Toying with the weapon, he came towards me: "Now supposing, Mr. Ukrainian American, something should happen to you right here and now, do you think Washington would go to war with us? The trouble with you is you forget that you are a Russian. Never mind that American passport of yours. We happen to know where you were born."

I did not move. I was unable to utter a sound. Through the

years I had heard many a story of "quiet" or "home" executions as they were called. Everywhere there was hushed talk about assassinations masked as "suicides" or "murder by burglars."

But this couldn't be it, I reasoned, for I was of no use to them dead. To carry out their Ogato-Reswick scheme I must be alive and kicking. I therefore decided to make use of a name that three years back had sent two Chekists fleeing from the Hotel Savoy. Accordingly, I told the men:

"Comrade Yagoda was the first to broach this subject. He is your chief, so take me to him or to his assistant Prokofiev. I will give them my answer. Is that asking too much?"

I was astonished to note that my words fell on deaf ears. They produced no effect whatsoever. On the contrary, the smaller Chekist, who had not yet spoken, chose this moment to drop a remark that made my heart thud like a trip hammer:

"Don't forget that anyone sharing with us a top military secret cannot live unless he is willing to co-operate."

As though aware of the terrible impact of his words, he hastened to calm me. "Put away that gun," he said to his comrade. "That will get us nowhere." Then, to my great surprise and relief, he addressed me as "tovarishch" and suggested that we three sit down and talk things over.

"Why be stubborn, comrade," he argued. "What is it that we want from you—espionage? Of course not. You are not a spy. You couldn't be one if you tried. That we know. All we ask of you is a favor which any one of our foreign friends here would gladly perform if he had your contact with the Japanese Embassy."

Here it occurred to me to ask a question to which no Russian, not even a Chekist from the counterintelligence, could have a ready answer.

"Supposing I should be willing to do you this favor, and assuming that someone influential in the Apparatus should at some future date accuse me of having sold the Japanese a genuine instead of a fictitious mobilization plan, what means would there be of establishing the truth? As a lawyer I ask you, comrades:

Where would you or your friend Aldanov or even Yagoda be in the event of a frame-up? Can't you see that all of us may some day be charged with treason unless you give me time to discuss this thing with Comrade Yagoda or even with men higher up in the party?"

My visitors gave the appearance of being stumped. They glanced at each other as if to say: "He has something there." Then the older one took up the telephone.

"I must talk to Comrade Aldanov," he said. "Would you mind stepping out of the room?"

I went into the parlor. A few minutes later the Chekist came in smiling. He was a changed man.

"Aldanov," he said, "has no objection to your consulting with either Comrades Yagoda or Prokofiev, provided you do it today and provided you promise not to discuss this matter with anyone else without his consent."

The man held out his hand. He turned to his companion. "Alexei, shake hands with the comrade. Let him know that we two are only small fry. We do what we are told."

The gun-toting Chekist stepped forward, mumbling: "This thing is too knotty for my peasant *bashka* (head)."

In parting, they explained that to them and Aldanov the whole scheme had seemed simple and easy.

"After all," said the older one, "Ogato is your friend. You see each other almost daily. What could be simpler than for you to hand him a paper? But the way you figure it out, I must say you have a head on your shoulders."

The men were no sooner gone than I stretched out on the sofa, boots and all, and fell asleep. On waking in broad daylight I heard talk in the next room and recognized the voices of Prokofiev and Manya. When I called, Prokofiev opened the door and came towards me with an expression of unfeigned sadness on his pale, wrinkled face.

"You need not go into details," he said. "We have a full report from Aldanov. He and his subordinates have been acting under emergency orders."

"What about Berns?" I asked.

"Comrade Yagoda ordered Berns's release as soon as he learned about it. He is expecting you at his office. I am sure he can explain everything. I warned him against trouble when he first broached this business."

Prokofiev agreed with me that any scheme touching on mobilization was dynamite and should not be undertaken without ample guarantees against some future intrigue.

"But Comrade Yagoda," he said, "is now ready to give you every assurance in the presence of mutual friends like Rykov, Yenukidze, or Karakhan." He glanced at the clock, reminding me that Yagoda was waiting.

When Prokofiev began to speak I listened with pleasure. It was good to know that Boris was free and was either back home or on the way there. But this talk about "mobilization" and "assurance" brought on a feeling of weariness. I was tired of it all; tired of Moscow, of my job, of the stark misery around me, of the lies, hypocrisy, subterfuge, of the spineless Kremlin liberalism, of the appalling fright that hung over Russia like a cloud obscuring the light of heaven. More than ever before I wanted to get away. I was yearning for sunshine, for the great clear spaces of the free world. And while Prokofiev's words were sounding in my ears I thought of but one thing—an exit visa. I wanted one before the day was over, and I let him know it.

"Yagoda can wait," I said. "I don't care to see either him or anyone else in Moscow. You have been kind to me in the past. Do me one more kindness. Help me get my visa quickly. I want to leave Moscow on the first train out."

"In that I can be of little help," Prokofiev answered. He held out his hand and left at once.

Half an hour later I was at the Visa Department of the Foreign Office, pleading with Frankel, head of the bureau, for an outgoing visa. Frankel reminded me of the GPU rule that made it impossible for any foreigner to leave the U.S.S.R. in less than forty-eight hours from the time of application.

Again the GPU!

Frankel promised to do his best, but I knew he would be helpless in a case of this kind. Surely the GPU was not going to rush my departure now. Unfortunately, they had a perfectly legal excuse to hold me. I was filing my application on November 6—the very eve of the tenth anniversary of the Revolution. In my hectic state I forgot all about the great festivities, preparations for which had been going on for months. On my way back from the Foreign Office I noticed the flags and streamers. At the AP, I found a number of cards. They were invitations to a gala performance of the ballet, to a meeting at the House of Columns to be addressed by leaders of the party and government, and to a Foreign Office reception. There were also telephone messages from Rykov's secretary and from the Press Department. I assigned my assistants to cover whatever had to be covered that evening, as well as the parade on the following day, and ignored the messages. I was in thought already far away from Russia. My one regret was that I must leave dear friends forever. Above all I missed Boris. According to Prokofiev he was already free. His failure to turn up was understandable. It would take him days, I thought, perhaps weeks to get over the shock. He had no telephone. A visit to his home might upset his parents. The mere sight of a foreigner a day after his arrest was likely to arouse relatives and neighbors. It remained to wait for his call. He came later in the day. Manya, who was very fond of my friend, saw him through the window. She ran to meet him, crying: "Boris! Boris! He is free, free!" We embraced and danced for joy.

Manya brought vodka and zakuski. Grisha, my daily visitor at lunch, banged away at the piano. The telephone rang, interrupting our hastily improvised celebration. It was Podolsky the censor. His voice betrayed excitement. He was waiting for me at the Foreign Office. Something very big had come up. He couldn't tell me over the phone.

"If it is in connection with coverage," I said, "I will send Kotov. I am through."

I heard Podolsky say he was coming over, and hung up. Half

an hour later he burst in on our little party. He declined to join us, insisting that I must come with him.

"Comrade Karakhan is waiting for you," he said. "It is in connection with an appointment at the Kremlin."

I sat down, unmoved by the exciting news. Podolsky did not know what to make of it. Evidently he had no idea of my experience during the past night. All that Podolsky knew was that a last-minute change had been made in arrangements for the Soviet Premier to meet the foreign press on the tenth anniversary of the Revolution. Instead, he was to give The Associated Press an exclusive interview on the state of the U.S.S.R.

Thus I was faced with one of those tasks that no newsman can shirk. The prestige of a great news organization was involved. An exclusive interview was being offered the AP by the head of a state on a historic occasion. Take it I must, regardless of any plans to the contrary.

On our way to the Foreign Office, Podolsky told me that Rothstein, head of the Press Department, had been busy for days arranging the Premier's press conference. Only that morning the matter was taken out of his hands and referred to Vice-Commissar Karakhan.

"The old man is angry," he said. "Frankly, I wonder what could have brought this change?"

I knew the answer the moment I entered Karakhan's office. The vice-commissar, a close friend with whom I often went riding, led me to the window that faced the GPU across the street.

"I know what happened," he said. "So do Comrades Rykov and Yenukidze. Yagoda lunched with us today at the Kremlin. He told us the whole story. Before we go any further let's get one thing straight. You are getting this exclusive interview not as compensation for your troubles. Comrade Rykov, as you know, is fond of you. The question of the exclusive interview was never even mentioned at lunch. What we did discuss was a way to insure you and your friends against any further annoyance from agents of the counterintelligence. The Premier

asked me to tell you that he is prepared to give you such guarantees at dinner tonight. By that time your interview will be on the wires and your mind will be at ease."

At the Kremlin I found Rykov in a festive mood. He greeted me in his usual hearty manner: "Has Karakhan made matters clear to you?" he asked. "Can we proceed to business?"

A full hour before dinner I had the interview on the wires. It was widely played up in the American and British press.

At dinner Rykov turned to Yagoda: "Genrikh Georgevich," he said, "in the presence of Comrades Karakhan and Yenukidze, I warn you. Henceforth I shall hold you personally accountable for the safety and freedom of our friend here as well as of his associates and relatives, should they ever come to Moscow."

I looked around the table. Judging by the expression of these men, they all seemed to have taken a grave view of the night incident at my home and were fully determined to protect me. There was no doubt in my mind then that they had the power to do it. It could not have occurred to me at that moment that these four men—three of them high executives of a great nation—were destined within a decade to meet their death in the GPU slaughterhouse.

Chapter 18

Trotsky in Decline

FROM THE KREMLIN I WENT straight to the Foreign Office reception for diplomats and newsmen at the Sugar Palace. My main object was to get some advance information on the Trotskyist demonstration that, according to rumor, was to take place during the tenth-anniversary parade on Red Square.

On the previous night AP headquarters and our bureaus in London, Paris, and Berlin had cabled for confirmation or denials of the rumor. According to stories published abroad, Moscow was in a state of siege.

The affair at the Morozov mansion, like most other Soviet functions, was a gaudy display. Against the drab background of a hungry, ragged, and prematurely freezing capital, they loaded tables with great heaps of fresh caviar, wild game, fish, wine, and champagne and vodka of old vintage. The guests drank and ate amidst a clatter of plates, bottles, clinking glasses, and loud, swaggering talk. Among those crowding around the buffets and rubbing shoulders with foreign diplomats and newsmen were discreetly attired spies, *provocateurs*, and the usual assortment of beautiful women forced into espionage service. Sincere idealists like Bukharin, Rykov, and Chicherin never showed up at any of these functions. The only admirable feature of this one was a concert given by the Opera and the Ballet.

Luckily the big hall was not devoid of nooks where one could retire with friends. "Islands" we called them. In one of these quiet alcoves I found some friends from the Ballet who had stayed after the concert, mingling with the guests. It was an old Tsarist custom which the bolshevik rulers were only too glad to follow.

Budyonny, the celebrated cavalry leader, an amateur dancer and admirer of the ballet, joined us. He was in high spirits. After helping himself to some vodka he offered to outdance any professional in a Kamarinskaya. Prima Ballerina Abramova took up the challenge. Thereupon Budyonny called over a harmonica player and went into a spin, cutting a Cossack caper with the ease and grace of a youngster. In the excitement caused by the general's dancing, amidst the laughter, applause, and yelling for an encore, I went around in search of someone in the know on Trotsky's demonstration plans. I found only guesses. It was getting late. I decided to get some sleep so as to be on the job before the start of the parade.

For days following that Trotskyist demonstration on Red Square, Muscovites referred to it in terms of the old Ukrainian proverb: "Big cloud, little rain." Early in the morning I roamed the city in search of the anticipated rebellion. For nearly two hours I rode along the main roads approaching Moscow; I circled its vast girdling boulevards and scoured its suburbs. Nowhere was there a sign of anything unusual. In the suburbs the demonstrators were forming military and civilian columns, but the maneuvering was no less orderly and methodical than in years past. There was but one departure from custom. On the Khodinka I came across a big formation of Georgian cavalrymen dressed in their long, bullet-chested capes, armed with spears and curved swords, and with rifles slung over their shoulders. They were a magnificent and awesome sight. Never before had I seen these Cossacks in the Red capital. I recalled some talk about a Georgian cavalry unit which was to take part in the parade, but this formation looked to me like a whole division.

I was on the Red Square half an hour early. A number of correspondents and diplomats were already there. The place was an armed camp. Columns of infantry stretched from the Ivorsky gate to the Cathedral of Vassily the Blessed. A band of six hundred was in front of Lenin's tomb.

At ten minutes to nine the little iron door in the wall directly behind the tomb swung open, and out of the Kremlin came the members of the Politburo and the People's Commissars. Rykov led, and Stalin as usual brought up the rear. The Soviet rulers mounted the platform on top of the mausoleum and gazed calmly down on the troops and on the now dense crowd of civilians filling the square.

At nine o'clock sharp, on the first ring of the Kremlin chimes, War Commissar Voroshilov appeared at the open Spasky gate, mounted on a black charger. He was approached by the commander of the parade who saluted with drawn sword and followed the War Commissar at a gallop through the shouting, serried ranks towards the tomb. There Voroshilov dismounted, and the parade was under way. It began with a ceremonial infantry march and was followed by a charge of Caucasian cavalry. They raced past the reviewing stand at breath-taking speed. As the clatter of horses and weapons rose to a continuing thunder, Stalin's usual composure gave way to a demonstration of enthusiasm never before exhibited in public. To experienced observers his conduct seemed significant; it was a clear warning that he was ready for a showdown with any military unit that sided with the civilian Trotskyist demonstration. During the turmoil caused by the racing Georgians, I noticed Krassin and Karakhan standing a few yards to my left, and I moved over to get their reaction.

"Stalin is not taking any chances," said Krassin. "He brought them here just in case. . . ."

Krassin was apprehensive lest some minor incident cause a catastrophe, but Karakhan laughed and assured me I would have nothing sensational to cable.

"On the way here," he said, "a friend told me that at least

two Trotskyist divisions, perhaps more, are ready to march on the Red Square, but it's all nonsense. The Rights are in full control of the army, and they have taken measures to protect the Trotskyists on their promise that their demonstration will be strictly civilian. It was an all-round Leninist understanding."

Karakhan was right. Less than two hours after the beginning of the demonstration I was able to file my story, setting forth the paltry details of Trotsky's first public challenge to Stalin. From a fancied rising of the proletariat it had dwindled to a mere scuffle, barely noticed by the parading masses. This was the story:

Shortly after the end of the military parade, a group of Trotskyists appeared on the square, yelling, "Down with Stalin!" They carried anti-Stalinist streamers which they waved frantically. Their yells were soon drowned in the singing, band-music, and roar of huge columns that swept down the pavement like a vast stream, hardly aware of the rebels. Before the Trotskyists reached the reviewing stand, they were surrounded by a group of men who pelted them with mud and tore up their streamers. The attackers as well as the attacked were soon lost sight of in the enormous mass that pressed forward beneath a moving forest of red banners.

A few minutes later another Trotskyist group emerged from the Ivorsky gate and was again set upon by men who, judging by their quick and efficient work of demolition, had been well trained for the job. In a short time there was not a Trotskyist streamer in sight. There followed two or three more brief skirmishes, and the rumored demonstration was over. The parade continued all day.

Later on, a friend telephoned me that someone had fired a bullet at Trotsky while he was riding through the streets in an open car. The bullet glanced off the pane of the windshield. No one was hurt. That was all. The day that was to bring out Trotsky's followers in massed strength passed like other Soviet holidays, leaving things as they were. But the incident, though trifling, gave Stalin a pretext for clinching his victory. On No-

vember 15, eight days after the demonstration, Trotsky and Zinoviev were expelled from the party, and their colleagues and followers, including Kamenev, were given the final choice: **EXPULSION AND EXILE OR JOIN IN THE ATTACK ON TROTSKY.**

The next day there occurred in Moscow a tragedy that shook the capital and sparked a spontaneous anti-Stalinist outbreak. Adolf Joffe, one of the founders of bolshevism and Lenin's first ambassador to Germany and Japan, committed suicide. In a letter addressed to Trotsky he stated that his act was a protest against Stalinism. He admonished Trotsky and his friends to stand firm as Lenin had done and never compromise in the face of adversity. The contents of the note were made known in thousands of pamphlets, drawing a tremendous crowd to the funeral.

From the Foreign Office, where the body lay in state, I followed the bier to Novodyevichy Cemetery, walking behind Trotsky, whose whole frame seemed to have shrunk since I last saw him. His face was as ashen as the sky overhead. His eyes had lost their bright gleam. He walked behind the coffin with bowed head. Among those in the van of the cortège were Yenukidze and Yagoda.

The long march on foot passed without incident. But at the main gate to the cemetery, the Chekist Byelinky forbade any mourners except the family to enter. By that time Trotsky was in a state bordering on collapse. He leaned heavily on the arms of comrades, a silent witness to a riotous scene. Several men who tried to push their way past Byelinky were hit with rifle butts and lay bleeding in the snow. Karl Radek was among the first casualties.

Yenukidze and Yagoda came on the run. They ordered Byelinky to let the people pass. Inside the gate I saw GPU riflemen mount the stone fence around the burial place.

At the open grave there was tense silence. Trotsky and his friends stood over the coffin with bowed heads. No one spoke. No one wept—not even the widow who stood next to Trotsky,

unveiled, dry-eyed, seemingly too stunned for tears. Then, as they lifted the scarlet-draped casket over the pit, there came from the crowd a spontaneous roar: "*Doloy Stalina!*" (Down with Stalin!) Instantly, the whole vast cemetery was in the grip of a mass passion. The cry rose to the low-hanging clouds and echoed in the suburbs beyond. Yenukidze jumped on the fence and waved frantically to the shouting crowd as the soldiers lined up along the fence and took aim. This grim warning, far from quieting the people, seemed to spur them to greater vehemence. As if eager to die on the spot, they defied the Chekists with repeated cries of "Down with Stalin!" Seemingly in fear lest Yagoda give the order to shoot, Yenukidze stepped in front of him, waving to Trotsky and urging him to speak. Trotsky straightened up and raised both arms in a plea for silence. The response was instantaneous. In a few moments the clamor died down, giving way to suspense. People strained their ears in an effort to hear Trotsky, whose usually ringing voice was barely audible. The great orator's few words sounded as hollow as if coming from the still open grave. His magnetism was gone with his glory. He was a beaten man. But though barely audible even to those standing near, his speech served the purpose of calming the crowd.

I went from the cemetery directly to the Foreign Office where I wrote a full account of the funeral.

"You may hold it for future reference," said the censor. "I have my instructions. You can write on this subject no more than that Joffe died and was buried today in Novodyevichy Cemetery. You might add a biographical note."

After clearing my brief report, Podolsky became reminiscent. He had known Joffe intimately and regarded him as one of the finest idealists in the party. Joffe had inherited a fortune which in his boundless devotion to the cause he had given to the bolshevik underground movement. From Lenin down, all the Bolsheviks loved and admired him—all except Stalin. His very idealism and his long record of devotion to Lenin's party made Stalin hate him. Though desperately sick and unable to

do anything for many months, he had been denied decent living quarters and had been hounded by spies.

The rumors of a Trotskyist rebellion persisted even after the poor showing on November 7. The foreign press continued to publish reports of grave unrest in the Soviet Union. Day after day New York and London urged me to check on those rumors. To all of them the Press Department had a two-word reply: "Without foundation!"

Towards the end of November the reports of trouble in the provinces became so alarming that the AP cabled me to investigate on the spot. According to plausible reports, a Trotskyist army in the Ukraine had gained a number of strategic positions and was preparing to march on Moscow. The Foreign Office, however, despite the working arrangement with Tass, refused to let me go. The AP had sent Charles Stephenson Smith, head of its European service, to see Maxim Litvinov, Russia's Vice-Commissar of Foreign Affairs, in Geneva. Smith urged Litvinov to use his influence to lift the ban on newsmen's travel. Litvinov promised to communicate with Moscow and gave Smith the impression that the objection to my touring the Ukraine had been virtually withdrawn. Thus assured, the AP urged me to renew my application for a travel permit. I did so, but again there was a prompt refusal. An appeal to Yagoda brought the reply:

"The Apparat is now in full charge of the foreign press. Write to Stalin."

But such a step, I was warned, would antagonize the Press Department and render my work in Moscow extremely difficult, if not impossible.

On December 1 there occurred one of those sudden changes characteristic of a country subject to the whims of a dictator. Karakhan called me in for legal consultation on a matter in which Stalin, he said, was keenly interested. He showed me some clippings from the New York *American* and other Hearst papers containing interviews allegedly given by Stalin—an ob-

vious fiction in view of his repeated refusals to be interviewed.

Karakhan wanted to know what legal action, if any, Stalin could take against Hearst. My offhand guess was: "None, unless he is willing to come to New York and file a libel suit." Hearst, I added, would like nothing better. Karakhan agreed and went on to say that he had called me at the request of Stalin who was anxious to have The Associated Press and Reuters publish a denial. Feeling as I did about Stalin, I tried to dodge the privilege. I suggested that the statement be given to all the foreign correspondents.

But Karakhan insisted. Stalin, he explained, felt embarrassed before Rykov and other comrades at the Kremlin. Not that they believed in the genuineness of the alleged interviews. There was never any doubt that they were made up. But Stalin was embarrassed because, when first notified of them, he had ordered the *Daily Worker* in New York to publish a denial. This was regarded at the Kremlin as a shining example of the Secretary's ignorance of the world outside Russia. A denial in the *Daily Worker* was worse than ineffective; it was ridiculous. Realizing his mistake, Stalin was anxious to publish a protest through America's biggest news agency.

"But the whole American press is better still," I argued.

"No," said Karakhan. "Stalin is a man of whims. He wants to call Hearst a liar through the AP. He was so insistent on this that I don't dare face him with a refusal."

I remarked to Karakhan that the AP was not likely to publish the denial since the Kremlin had not made good Litvinov's promise that I should be permitted to tour the Ukraine. I called his attention to a series of sensational articles appearing in the *New York Times*, according to which a certain "General" Leplevsky, in command of a Trotskyist army, had engaged Stalinist troops in a major battle on the banks of the Dniester. The river, it appeared, ran red with blood and was clogged with bodies. The fighting centered around Tiraspol and Moghiliev. The reporter claimed that both of these cities lay in ruins.

Our headquarters having cabled these reports and having again urged me to proceed to the Ukraine, I did not see how the AP could be expected to do Stalin a personal favor unless the government let me go.

Karakhan begged me to cable the denial at once, assuring me that he would take the matter up with Stalin and arrange everything.

I took the commissar at his word. In his presence I wrote out the cable and let his secretary take it to the censor. A day later I received permission to go to the Ukraine. But it took the Foreign Office nearly a week to arrange the technical details involved in sending uncensored cables from the provinces—an unheard-of privilege in all Soviet history.

I left Moscow the second week of December. Karakhan, Yagoda, and Prokofiev came to the station to see me off. All three assured me that my movements would be entirely free. The Ukrainian authorities had been instructed to facilitate my journey and above all to let me talk to people in all walks of life without interference by guides—they being generally regarded by the Russians as agents of the GPU. I thus felt sure that my time would not be wasted on one of those carefully planned, Soviet-sponsored tours on which foreigners move about in a world as remote from reality as though they were rotating on a vast stage crowded with actors in make-up and artificially shifting scenes.

In Kharkov, my first stop, I realized that my friends in Moscow were, to say the least, indulging in fantasy. There was evidence right at the railway station that my tour was being conducted under the auspices of the Apparat. A delegation of high officials, civilian and military, was waiting on the platform. The spokesman introduced himself as the "Ukrainian Commissar of Foreign Affairs." He turned to a fur-wrapped, smiling young man whose face seemed familiar. I had met him before but could not recall where until he held out his hand, saying: "Byelsky, remember?"

I recognized his voice and the feverish gleam in his eyes. He was the Chekist who had come aboard the U.S. destroyer that brought me to Odessa in 1922. During the passing years I had heard his name mentioned, always in connection with the terror. One man who never tired of talking about him was the famous Soviet playwright Valentin Katayev, who had known Byelsky in their school days in Odessa. Katayev's pet story was about how his boyhood friend had saved him from execution. Katayev, a White Army officer, was captured and brought before a revolutionary tribunal presided over by Byelsky. He was one of a hundred-odd prisoners all condemned to death. They were about to leave the courtroom to face a machine-gun squad when Byelsky called out his name. "You stay here, you White rascal! I struck a bargain with my comrades on the tribunal. We will let you live if you will devote your talent to the Revolution."

Ever since that night Katayev had felt grateful to his schoolmate but feared him nevertheless.

"In spite of his occasional good impulses," Katayev would say, "Byelsky is the most terrible killer in Russia. God help the Russians if he is ever restored to power."

He was, in due time.

From Katayev I had also learned that Byelsky, though officially an editorial writer on a Kharkov newspaper, was closely connected with the central Apparat. And now this dangerous man was to "facilitate my hazardous travels in midwinter." The Ukrainian Commissar made this announcement while I was shaking hands with the Chekist.

The commissar informed me further that railway movements in the Ukraine were slow. In some places one had to wait for a train two or three days. From Odessa to Tiraspol I would have to travel either by car or by sleighs. The road connecting the two cities ran through a steppe. There were bandits in the region. It would be unsafe to proceed without an armed escort. In every place en route it would be necessary to make new cable

contacts, as the Provincial telegraph people would not transmit foreign press reports without permission from a properly authorized official.

"Therefore," he concluded, "it is necessary to send with you someone in authority. We couldn't think of a better man than Comrade Byelsky."

From that moment until the end of my journey the Chekist was with me day and night. In spite of all protests and pleas for privacy I never woke up once without seeing Byelsky either in my room or close by. He was not unpleasant. He managed invariably to find some excuse for his intrusions. Confronted one day with a flat accusation of spying, he laughed heartily.

"We two have different jobs," he said. "I know you consider me a nuisance. But please understand. I am under orders, and my orders are to see to it that you steer clear of Trotskyists."

At Kharkov there was a long wait for the train to Odessa. The local commissar insisted that I have lunch with him and his friends in a near-by hotel. It turned out to be a banquet which must have been prepared well in advance, for he led the way into a large dining room where scores of people were waiting. There were speeches and toasts to the "American correspondent in search of a nonexistent counterrevolution." On the following day I saw the story headlined in the Odessa newspapers. Tass took pains to spread the tale all over Russia. In all of this I could see the diligent hand of the Apparat. Having at long last granted a foreign correspondent permission to travel over forbidden ground, they proceeded to exploit the journey as final proof that Trotskyism was dead in the provinces as well as in Moscow.

In Odessa I was interviewed by Soviet reporters on my impressions thus far. I saw clearly now that they were using my tour for propaganda purposes, and I told them I would make no comment until the end of the journey.

According to plan we were to leave Odessa for Tiraspol at dawn. Notwithstanding this, the local Apparat boys kept me

awake at an all-night party to which they invited "General" Leplevsky—commander-in-chief, according to the *New York Times*, of the Trotskyist army. The Leplevsky they brought to my table was a Red Army officer of low rank who had at one time served under Trotsky. He admitted interest in the Trotskyist movement but denied the stories of revolt in the Ukrainian Red Army. Other officers present asserted that there was no other Leplevsky on the army lists. Their story had to be taken at face value since I had no means of checking.

My talk with the army men had no sooner ended than a bevy of Byelsky's local admirers invaded the restaurant of Hotel London where we were stopping. Conspicuous among the guests were communist teen-agers wearing scarlet bandanas. They mobbed the Chekist and overwhelmed him with kisses and yells for "the great avenger of counterrevolutionary crimes."

Along with Byelsky's amorous admirers came a band of bala-laika players, together with singers, dancers, and waiters bearing trays of food and vodka.

I recalled that we were to leave at dawn and got up to snatch some badly needed sleep, but Byelsky pleaded, becoming unexpectedly familiar.

"Volodya," he said, stressing my pet name, "why not relax? Here you are in our gay old Odessa, and all you can think of is business. What sort of a man are you anyway? Who ever heard of a traveler passing a loveless night in Odessa?" Then leaning close: "Look over these little raspberries—you can have any one of them."

"So you are a pimp besides," I exclaimed, annoyed more by his sly tone than by his suggestion.

I expected a scene, but Byelsky was impervious to insult. He merely smiled: "Pimp, Chekist—it's all bourgeois nonsense. If you really want to know the truth about me, ask your friend Katayev. I saved him and many others."

I had heard other Chekists try to appease a troubled conscience by balancing occasional good deeds against continual

crime. He spoke like Yagoda and the rest. None of them ever seemed to have the blood of thousands of dead men on their consciences.

The noise in the hotel made sleep impossible. We stayed up most of the night and, as a result, left Odessa too late to reach Tiraspol in daytime. Six of us, including the chauffeur and three armed guards, traveled in an unheated car. We started in ten-below-zero weather and soon ran into a blinding snowstorm. As the cold became intense Byelsky opened a valise stocked with vodka, salami, and black bread. There were no glasses. Bottle after bottle went the rounds of passengers and chauffeur. No one heeded my pleas for caution.

For some time they sang to the accompaniment of a harmonica. Towards evening they were all drunk. Four of them were fast asleep as darkness fell over the storm-swept steppe. The chauffeur stayed awake for a while, but soon he, too, bent over the wheel and passed out. And there I was, alone in a snow-bound wilderness, vainly kicking and slapping one after the other of my companions. There was no response from any of them.

For a while I sat there hoping someone would wake up and help me arouse the rest. Then, nauseated by the foul air and the stench of alcohol, I opened a door and stepped out into the night.

Outside, the gale tore and shrieked, lashing the stalled vehicle with fierce blasts. For a few moments I managed to hold on to the door handle, vainly trying to discern some light, some sign of human life. But in the howling darkness I could see little save the swirling snow. The blizzard drove me back into the car where the men still slept. They were as insensible to the intense cold as to my slaps and pinching. In despair, I gave each one of them in succession a good sock on the jaw. There was no reaction. But for their heavy snoring they might have been dead. At last I, too, began to be overcome by drowsiness. I recalled stories of people freezing in sleep and tried hard to keep awake. I remember laughing inwardly at the thought of a

headline: "American correspondent dies in search of counter-revolution." Then I, too, drifted off.

I must have slept for some time, for on waking I perceived a change in the atmosphere. The wind had eased up. The snow-fall had subsided. Through a rift in the clouds I glimpsed a solitary star.

Suddenly there came strange noises from ahead of us. At first they seemed unreal, but soon I distinguished the jingle of bells and then the crunching of sleighs. A prolonged cry pierced the night: "Byelsky! Oh, Comrade Byelsky!"

Then someone called my name, and I saw lanterns swinging down the road ahead of us. As I got out of the car and yelled back I could make out horses, sleighs, and men coming towards us. They were a search party sent out from Tiraspol when we failed to show up. The leader explained that we were only two miles from town.

It took the rescuers some time to rouse my companions from their stupor. Two of them had to be rushed to a hospital. The rest, including Byelsky, were brought to a hotel where we sat around a boiling samovar hearing about our narrow escape.

We reached Tiraspol on December 12. The next day *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, and the whole Soviet press carried the news of my arrival in a town allegedly destroyed in a battle with Trotskyists.

After a night's sleep I set out to investigate what fighting, if any, had occurred in the region. Despite my repeated protests Byelsky insisted on coming along. Determined to steer clear of biased party men and sympathizers, I began by visiting a church. Byelsky must have been known and feared throughout the entire province, for the priest, the deacon, and even the worshippers refused to talk in his presence. They gave no explanation; they simply behaved as though they were deaf and dumb. After this experience I told Byelsky that unless he kept out of the way I should cable the AP that the work could not be done in the presence of a GPU guide. That ultimatum worked. Byelsky agreed to stay in the background. I then went through the market place, chatting freely with peasants and small traders. They

all denied Trotskyist fighting but complained of frequent GPU raids, searches, confiscation, arrests, exiles, and executions.

Inside a synagogue, Jews in prayer shawls confirmed the stories I had heard outside. They denied that there had been fighting. Many of them uttered their denials in tones of unmistakable regret.

"Anything, even war," said one old man, "would be better than life under the Cheka. A couple of years ago things seemed to have improved considerably, but now it is worse than in wartime, much worse than under the Tsar."

Here the rabbi joined in: "Under the Tsar there would be a pogrom once in ten or twenty years. Now our whole life is a pogrom. Hardly a day goes by without arrests, deportations, or executions."

A gray-bearded Jew, wrapped in a prayer shawl, pointed to the Torah, saying: "God is my witness. Jewish Communists are worse than Gentiles. If a Jew has trouble with a Gentile Chekist, he may escape; but if he falls into the hands of a Jew, he is lost. They never hesitate to destroy their own flesh and blood. I know of a Jewish girl Communist who married her father's executioner."

After a day of interviews I cabled the AP a complete report, suggesting that further investigation would be chasing a phantom.

On my way back to Moscow I stopped for a week end in Kiev. There I learned from the *Pravda* of December 18, 1927, that, while touring the Ukraine, I had also interviewed Joseph Stalin. The preposterous lie was spread under a three-column headline reading: "A Statement by Comrade Stalin." In the introductory paragraph to his long statement, Stalin wrote: "In reply to a query by representatives of the Foreign press (the AP, the Wolff Agency, the Neue Freie Presse) Comrade Stalin states . . ." and he went on to tell the story about Hearst's publishing the false interviews to which Karakhan had called my attention. He then quoted verbatim my cable denying the au-

thenticity of those interviews and demanded to know: "Has The Associated Press published Reswick's cable, and if not, why not?" From Stalin's query I inferred that either the AP had ignored his complaint about Hearst or the story got poor play. I never bothered to find out and took little interest in the rest of Stalin's long tirade. But the mendacious introduction seemed to me astonishing. How could one in Stalin's position take such liberties with elementary truth? He knew very well that I was away from Moscow at the time.

On my arrival in Moscow I called Karakhan's attention to the falsehood. He laughed at my naïveté! "After all these years," he said, "you seem to know very little about Stalin. Josif Visarionovich is a man of whims and red-hot anger. Whenever he gets really angry, as he must have been with Hearst and the AP, he doesn't bother about such trifles as truth."

"Is it a trifle for the Secretary of your party to lie in *Pravda*, the communist Holy of Holies?" I asked.

The commissar smiled. "Many things melt in the heat of anger," he said.

But other leaders took a more serious view of the incident. Nikolai Bukharin, editor-in-chief of *Pravda*, whom I met at Rykov's that week end, said: "When Bolsheviks lie in the interest of party strategy it is the same as generals practicing deception of the enemy in wartime. The revolutionary struggle in Russia is not ended, and there are times when we cannot afford the luxury of naked truth, which we love nevertheless. But Comrade Stalin is different. He has no scruples about lying for personal ends—particularly when he is mad, as he must have been in this case. All the same, petty lies of this sort undermine the prestige of our press and party."

The incident did not pass without a tragic sequel. "Stalin," they say in Moscow, "never forgets and never forgives."

Shortly after my return from the Ukraine, Dalyetsky, head of Tass, informed me that he was in trouble. Stalin, it appeared, had ordered him to terminate the Tass contract with The Asso-

ciated Press. Instead of obeying blindly, Dalyetsky enlisted the aid of Chicherin and other notables in an effort to prevent the loss of Moscow's best press contact abroad. Stalin gave in, but he did not forget. When I saw Dalyetsky in 1934, he told me he was shuddering to think of the price he might have to pay for that victory in 1927. He was among the first to disappear in the Great Purge of 1936-38.

Chapter 19

Trotsky Exiled

IN JANUARY 1928, LEON TROTSKY was but one of many outlaws awaiting exile. Everything was set for one of the grimmest episodes of the Revolution. Only the date, the place, and the problem of safeguarding the famous prisoner from a "stray" Stalinist bullet remained in doubt.

The most I could get out of the Kremlin and Lubianka was that the Rights on the Politburo feared the assassination of the former War Commissar by Stalinist guards—an event which would be likely to rouse the high command and many soldiers of the Red Army. Impressed by such predictions, Stalin withdrew his objection to a proposal that the Politburo take charge of Trotsky's arrest, deportation, and safekeeping in the place of exile. To make sure that no harm befell the demoted leader, the Politburo named two men of unimpeachable character to supervise the proceedings. They were Nicholai Bukharin and the Vice-Commissar of the GPU, Prokofiev. It was up to them to make all the necessary arrangements.

From the first week in January I was in daily touch with Prokofiev, who took great pains to keep me posted. At first it seemed to him that Trotsky, already under house arrest, would be on his way to exile before January 10. But on the eighth of

the month he foresaw a delay of days and perhaps weeks. This gave me an opportunity to tackle a long-deferred assignment in Leningrad.

For some time New York had been interested in the experiments of the famous Russian scientists Pavlov and Byekhterev. My editors wanted me to visit their laboratories, talk to them, and observe their work. Professor Byekhterev had died in the meantime, but his experiments in group hypnotism were being carried on by disciples. There were rumors that GPU confessions were being extorted with the aid of Byekhterev's technique. Personally, I was skeptical of this. My experience with the counterintelligence had taught me a lesson. The GPU seemed to have no need of mysterious scientific aid when ready at hand was the compelling instinct to save one's own life and that of dear friends and relatives or to choose between a painless end and one of unspeakable torment. Still, it was interesting to look into the matter.

At midnight on January 10, I boarded a Leningrad train after repeated promises by Prokofiev to keep me informed about Trotsky. Prokofiev went so far as to promise me an exclusive story.

I came to Pavlov with a letter of introduction from a Kiev academician Professor Bravin, whom I had often met at the home of his daughter. Professor Pavlov's eccentricities were a favorite theme with the Bravins. My hosts and their friends never tired of discussing the scientist's long and open defiance of the Bolsheviks. Lenin and his Right-wing successors had chosen to ignore Pavlov's opposition. Despite his contempt for their regime, they let him go on with his world-famous experiments. The Bravins were worried now, however, wondering how long Stalin would tolerate the insults of an illustrious enemy.

Pavlov had the gift of being thoroughly frank without giving offense. On reading Bravin's letter he said:

"I will gladly show you everything we do here. But how in the world can your editors expect you to write intelligently on

a subject which I have studied for decades and still don't know much about?"

The old man shook hands with a vigor surprising for one of his age, then he led the way through a maze of narrow corridors, pointing to dogs with various complicated attachments. After taking me through the whole laboratory, the scientist suggested that I engage one of his assistants to write about his research.

"As to you," he said, "I can give you something more important to write about. Do you know how many people have been executed in Leningrad since this Georgian became our uncrowned Tsar? Have you any idea how many innocent people have been shipped to Siberia in the past year? Can you guess how many are dying of cold and hunger?"

He contrasted Russia's current plight with the glories of her past, giving me a brilliant account of her achievements during the nineteenth century in science, literature, and art.

"And now we are doing nothing creative," he exclaimed, "absolutely nothing! What can you expect of a people chained and gagged by a gang of assassins? And where, for God's sake, is the free world? Why don't we hear from it? Don't people abroad know that a whole Russian generation is being exterminated? Will they never hear our cries of pain?"

I was stunned by the feverish glint in the old man's dim eyes, by the flaming ardor of his voice. If only our liberals could hear him, I thought, would they go on babbling about the great Soviet experiment?

On the following morning the secretary of the Byekhterev Laboratory phoned to invite me to a group hypnotic séance.

"You are welcome to see our work," he said, "but I must warn you of disappointment if you expect a political experiment. Most visiting foreigners do. Our treatment is confined strictly to alcoholics."

Obviously the people in charge of the institution were aware of the suspicion attaching to their work.

I was met at the entrance to the laboratory by the director,

a youngish, balding man, and a pretty nurse. They led the way to a whitewashed room. The patients, shabbily clad men, were already there. They were seated on chairs, facing a small platform. I counted twenty of them.

The room was unlighted and poorly ventilated. The short winter day was drawing to a close. Through the double glazed windows I looked out on a somber sky. A light snow shrouded the squatting, one-story buildings of the Leningrad suburbs. A hush was in the air. Everybody seemed drowsy—the patients, the two attendants, the charming nurse, and the doctor, who since greeting me at the door had not uttered a word. After taking my seat on a chair in front of the platform I, too, had difficulty in keeping awake.

At four o'clock sharp the doctor mounted the small platform and stood for a minute or two facing the audience in tense silence. He began to speak in a quiet, soothing, and yet singularly impressive tone, addressing the patients as "comrades."

Some of the men in the front row sat up, staring at the lecturer with wide-open eyes. Others alongside and behind seemed to have fallen asleep at the mere sight of the hypnotist.

As in a dream I listened to the doctor's caressing voice:

"Comrades, please look at me and through me into your past. Recall, each of you, a happy day in childhood, a bright day of sunshine and bliss. Forget your pain and suffering. Try to remember a time in spring, when you played in the sun's golden rays, when a gentle breeze kissed your cheeks and rustled the leaves on the trees above you and the grass beneath your feet. How happy you were then! How sublime the world! How good it felt to lie down on the green grass, to stretch your limbs and listen to the murmuring brook, to the singing birds! How gently you slept beside those clear, bubbling waters! Remember, comrades, those happy days. Forget, I beg you, the snow and frost outside. Forget all the unhappiness of your mature years. Forget, if only for a moment, all of your disappointments and pains. You are now back in childhood. Sleep, comrades!

Sleep gently! You are back again in the embrace of our mother earth, back in her loving arms."

Struggling against an overpowering drowsiness, I heard the hypnotist whisper: "Sleep! Sleep! Sleep!" I looked around with some effort and saw the whole group of twenty men fast asleep in their chairs. The doctor stepped from the platform and went through the lines, tilting heads, lifting arms, legs, and leaving them suspended in the air. No one stirred. Only heavy breathing and an occasional snore disturbed the silence of the now dark room.

The hypnotist returned to the platform where he resumed his lecture in a changed tone. In a commanding voice he said:

"From now on, men, each of you is completely subject to my will. Henceforth you will do exactly as I tell you. Remember, I am your master. I want you to give up alcohol once and for all. I forbid you to touch liquor. Not a single drop. Neither vodka, wine, nor beer." After saying this, the doctor rapped the table in front of him with a tiny mallet and commanded the men to wake up. As they opened their eyes he kept on repeating his admonition against drink.

One by one the alcoholics left their seats and filed past the platform on their way out. When they were gone, the doctor turned to me: "This, sir, is all we can show you. Our statistics prove that we cure nearly everyone we treat. Exceptions are rare. Most of our patients give up alcohol after the first séance."

On January 16 two wires came from Moscow; one from my assistant Kotov, the other from Prokofiev. Kotov informed me that a big crowd had demonstrated that morning at the Kazan station on a tip-off that Trotsky was to be taken to Alma Ata. All the newsmen had been on hand, but Trotsky did not appear.

Prokofiev's wire was anonymous. It read: "Take midnight train. Will meet you on platform."

On the following morning I was back in Moscow. Prokofiev met me with the news that a train at the near-by Yaroslav termi-

nal was ready to take Trotsky outside the city where his car would be switched to a special train bound for Alma Ata.

"There is ample time," said the Chekist. "It may be hours before Lyev Davidovich gets here."

He explained that to avoid a dangerous demonstration the Politburo had informed Trotsky that he was to leave on the sixteenth. The news got around and brought an immense crowd to the railway square. Meanwhile, they informed him that he was to leave on the nineteenth, figuring that this date also would get around. Thus they hoped to keep the public in ignorance of the actual day set for the leader's banishment—the seventeenth.

"But here," said Prokofiev, "we ran into trouble. This morning, when our people informed Trotsky that he was to leave today, he refused to go and locked himself in his room. Evidently he wants a demonstration. I instructed my men to be patient. They are keeping me informed by telephone. Unless the comrade changes his mind before noon, they will bring him here by force. Those are my orders."

Prokofiev led the way to the buffet where he ordered breakfast. There he told me that his main worry was not about Trotsky's "childish behavior" but about the long delay which might give his followers time to get wind of the real plan and stage a serious demonstration. "We have taken extraordinary precautions," he said. "Railroad Square and all the streets leading to it are heavily guarded."

Prokofiev was calm as usual and seemed in no hurry to leave the restaurant. Subordinates came in from time to time to report or receive instructions. After coffee he ordered vodka. I gasped.

"At this hour?"

"At any hour," he said. "It is twenty below zero, and moreover I don't like this job. Who could have thought in the civil-war days that Trotsky, of all our comrades, would be a prisoner on his way to exile! I can't forget the days when I served under him at the front. What a man! And how we loved him! He wrought miracles—miracles I tell you. . . . And always with

words . . . each word a shell, a grenade. May Comrade Stalin forgive me, but I still think that if it had not been for Trotsky the Tsar would be back on his throne today."

The waiter brought a pint bottle of vodka, which Prokofiev emptied with the zest of a thirsty man helping himself to cool, clear water. The drink, as so often happens with Russians, brought on a wave of reminiscence and self-reproach. After the third or fourth drink the commissar put down the empty glass with a bang and wiped his lips with the back of his hand.

"I am not the only one, either," he said. "Many of us in the party feel the same way about this dirty business. Comrade Bukharin, who is supposed to be in charge, is sick in bed. Yagoda, too, is unhappy. Yet there is nothing he, or I, or any of us can do. Officially the Politburo is in charge, but actually the Apparatus is bossing the show. All we do is obey orders."

An officer came to the table with a note. Prokofiev glanced at it and got up. "Well, they are coming at last," he said. "I wish it were over and done with." On the way out he told me that his men had been compelled to break into the room. Trotsky had refused to go and had been carried downstairs and out to the car.

Outside, the big Railway Square was an armed camp, barren of civilian passengers and traffic. Even the droshkys with their neighing nags and colorful drivers were gone. A solid cordon of cavalry surrounded the square, and detachments of infantry stood around their stacked rifles. Machine-gun squads and armored cars were stationed at all approaches. Two of them flanked the entrance to the Yaroslav terminal. Inside, the station was deserted save for some white-aproned porters, conductors, and uniformed officials, who all went about their business.

We had been in the terminal about ten minutes when an officer came in to report that they were bringing the prisoner. We were at the end of the hall, and before we had time to reach the door I heard a commotion outside. Suddenly the door burst wide open, and a group of GPU officers entered with revolvers drawn. They were followed by six civilians carrying a man

loosely wrapped in a fur coat. He had the appearance of a patient taken from a hospital bed. Underneath the fur he had nothing on except pajamas and socks. I looked at the pale-bluish, bespectacled, and sparsely bearded face. It was a grim caricature of Trotsky's proud visage. For some moments I was actually in doubt as to his identity.

"A ruse," I thought, "it can't be he! A cleverly made-up actor, perhaps."

Try as I might, I could not associate this limp, piteous figure with the man who led Russia's revolting masses in October and forged the Soviet victory against a world in arms. But my doubt vanished when Madame Trotsky appeared in the door. She came in with hair disheveled, lightly clad in spite of the bitter cold. She was leaning heavily on a man's arm. Notwithstanding an evident effort at self-control, tears streamed down her frost-flushed face.

Amidst the rapidly growing excitement, the noise of shuffling boots, commands by officers, and shouts of response from the soldiers, I saw a young man running down the hall. He stopped in front of a group of porters, crying hysterically:

"Comrade workers, look, be witnesses! . . . They are carrying away my father, Lyev Davidovich Trotsky! My father, who gave us victory!" The boy ran farther down the hall and stopped in front of another group: "Soviet workers, look at the prisoner! He is Trotsky, Lyev Davidovich, my father! Why do you stand idle? Why don't you do something? Can't you see it is Trotsky, Trotsky, Trotsky!"

His anguished cries echoed beneath the vaulted ceiling. The boy was plainly hysterical. He tripped, fell, and got up again: "Comrades, see! It is Trotsky! They are taking him away!"

Prokofiev was deeply moved. "It's the younger son Lyev," he said, gazing sadly after him.

More painful perhaps than the boy's agony was the stolid, unfeeling expression on the faces of the onlookers. Real or feigned, their indifference was sickening to behold. They watched the spectacle with the eyes of men who had come to

a circus. Joffe's widow and another woman trailed behind the prisoner. Both were in tears.

We followed the grim procession, led by Lyev whose cries were becoming more and more piercing. At first the Chekists seemed indisposed to interfere. But at the exit to the platform an officer grabbed the boy by the collar and threatened him with his fist. At that moment Trotsky's older son Sergei, whom I had not noticed before, came up on the run. He rushed the officer and struck him a terrific blow. He was instantly seized and surrounded by Chekists, but Prokofiev came to his rescue. Trotsky was loaded like baggage aboard the train. As it started, I watched the windows for a last glimpse of the prisoner. All I could see was the faces of soldiers gazing wistfully at the handful of followers and at the two crying women on the platform.

My story describing the scene was held back until the nineteenth, when the Soviet press announced the event. Thanks to Prokofiev, mine was the only eyewitness account. Though trimmed by the censor, it retained enough color to be named by the AP among its "outstanding stories of the year."

Chapter 20

Housing and Other Problems, Including Theodore Dreiser

A LONG NEWS LULL FOLLOWED the exile of Trotsky. For months there was little to cable but the loudly trumpeted "confessions" of his followers. That sickening farce, begun by the kowtowing of Zinoviev and Kameney, continued for some time. All over Russia, according to the Soviet press, leading Trotskyists and entire groups of their followers realized that "Comrade Stalin was right after all" and begged forgiveness for their ideological sins. On the surface this seemed a useless and disgusting ceremonial. But in reality it was the important prelude to another step in Stalin's maneuvers to attain absolute power. Having, in mock collaboration with the Rights, smashed his enemies on the Left, he was planning a similar strategy against the Rights. The baseness of this maneuver was only too obvious to every intelligent observer, but regard for intelligence no longer entered into Stalin's calculations. Fully in control now of his man-killing Apparatus and his fast-growing army of special police, he banked only on his vicious minority at the top and their moronic followers at the bottom. Neither the intelligentsia nor the people entered into his calculations. He was building his power on the underworld.

With little to do now, I decided to tackle the AP's housing problem in Moscow. For many years decent homes in the Red capital had been few and far between. Only a handful of powerful commissars, foreign diplomats, and some Nepmen could boast of comfortable living quarters. For the population in general, good homes, like the socialist utopia, were attainable in theory only. In practice it was almost impossible to find a room, let alone an apartment. Possession of a room was bait for marriage and the cause of untold pain when things went wrong between the possessor and the nuptial beneficiary. Many a discarded husband or wife, relegated to a corner of the room by some lucky successor, had to take it or perish.

Early in the Revolution apartments were split up into rooms with communal kitchens, baths, and lavatories. Later on, the rooms were subdivided and the tenants confined to a coffinlike space behind thin partitions. Still later came the era of "corners," when thousands of Muscovites were compelled to put up a cot in a room corner if not sleep on the floor.

With the population steadily on the increase, workingmen remained in vermin-ridden barracks located in the suburbs. In the center it took the government ten years to build a limited number of clumsy tenements on top of old buildings. These, too, soon became overcrowded and were in turn split up and "cornerized."

For many years the housing shortage in Moscow had been the cause of widespread prostitution and numerous suicides. A city with no space for legally sanctioned brothels became in due time the world's largest center of sexual vice. This was brought about by a combination of despair, lack of privacy, and indulgence in vodka—the only means of escape from unbearable monotony, undernourishment, shabby clothing, filth, and fear. Unable to cope with the housing problem, many Muscovites, taking their cue from Katayev's satire *The Squaring of the Circle*, laughed it off through tears. One simply had to take it or die. Hardly a day went by without its quota of tragic incidents, which were rarely published. Many a discarded wife or

husband, relegated to existence in a corner, saw in death the only means of relief from the agony of living in the same room with a successor in love. But these were exceptions. The vast majority preferred to cling to mere life, regarding jealousy and plain human decency as luxuries reserved for the non-Soviet world.

In my own circle of friends I came to know a number of curious marital setups. The young and beautiful ballerina Lola Smirnova divorced and remarried the same husband three times within a period of six months. On visiting the couple in their tiny room I could easily gauge their momentary marital status by the location of their old, dilapidated screen—a family heirloom. If the screen happened to be between their twin beds I knew that the Smirnovas were divorced. Its removal to the wall was a sign of remarriage. As a dancer at the Grand Theater, Lola had the rare privilege of a room with a window and running water. Unlike some of her privileged friends, she never took advantage of her husband when they fell out. In divorce as in marriage she would leave him in full possession of his bed and never once bring home any of her admirers.

But Dyemidova, the most beautiful and least talented of the Grand Ballet, was of different metal. Married to my friend Yuri Fyer, symphony conductor of the Grand Theater, Dyemidova surprised him one night by bringing home her dancing partner whom she had married earlier in the afternoon, having divorced Fyer in the morning. The two-minute ceremony took place while the conductor was in the theater rehearsing a new ballet. The postal card from the court announcing the divorce would arrive a day later.

Dyemidova's hasty action was prompted by a desire to punish her spouse for failure to get her a better role in a new ballet.

On returning home from a late show Fyer found his bed occupied by his much younger and more athletic successor Smoltsov, the youngest of the three dancing brothers. The newlyweds were generous enough to offer him "a corner" until he could find something better, but he fled in panic. It

was two in the morning when he rang my bell. I sat up most of that night trying to calm him, for he was on the point of suicide. He was desperately in love. Despite his position and influence, the ballet conductor could find no room, and I had to put him up for a fortnight. The last I heard, he was back with the newlyweds, hugging a corner.

A somewhat different housing situation developed at 23 Bolshaya Dmitrovka, the six-story apartment house into which the AP had moved for lack of anything better. There, in a two-room apartment on the floor above that of the AP, an influential and seemingly happy-go-lucky party man lived with three gay young ladies, one of them his legal wife and two his recent divorcées. They and their friends liked to indulge in hilarious all-night parties, which seriously interfered with my work and made sleep difficult. The comrade answered all my complaints with a standing invitation to join them.

The chairman of our house committee, a former real estate man, feared to intervene. My neighbor above, he said, was "too well connected." The AP paid more in real money than the combined rental of all the Soviet tenants in the house, yet the committee would not lift a finger to abate the nuisance caused by a "well-connected" tenant.

The gay neighbor upstairs was but one item on a long list of complaints. Others were more serious. The AP apartment was part of a rich man's prerevolutionary home. On the other side of a long wide hall were three one-room apartments, and we all shared a common kitchen and bath. One of the smaller apartments was occupied by a physician on the staff of the GPU hospital, another housed an industrial engineer afflicted with syphilis. The third was occupied by a beautiful young woman who, with the whole city in rags, managed somehow to dress in the latest fashions. According to the physician, who seemed to have the "low-down" on all the residents, she was the mistress of a powerful commissar residing elsewhere. He was in the habit of visiting her three times a week. As a rule she kept to herself, steering clear of all the tenants on either

side of the hall. This would have made her an ideal neighbor had it not been for her habit of clinging to the one bathroom, where she liked to sing operatic arias while the rest of us stood in line waiting. In this case, too, remonstrance with the chairman of the house committee was futile. The good man was more fearful of the mysterious commissar than of the gay party man above me.

But all these annoyances were mere child's play compared to Anyuta, the AP housemaid. Mills had taken over Anyuta from the previous owner of the apartment. She was an excellent cook, a habitual thief, and a diligent spy with a fine record at Lubianka. Although unable to read or write, Anyuta had an uncanny memory for faces and behavior. Her daily reports on my visitors were disturbing because she was also an excellent liar. It was chiefly due to her reports that Jimmy Mills became *persona non grata* in Moscow, and in my case Yagoda had to intervene more than once to spare me the trouble of explaining the visits of friends and acquaintances.

Other Russian servants looked upon spying as an odious duty. To Anyuta it was a privilege and a pleasure. Years back she had taken literally Lenin's admonition that "every Soviet housemaid should learn to govern." She had managed to make herself a power in the Moscow Servants' Union and thus held sway in spite of the many complaints of theft lodged against her. It was this thieving habit that finally compelled me to act.

The first thing Anyuta insisted on doing every morning was to brush my trousers. She ignored my pleas and orders to stay away from my clothes. Each morning, on returning from the bathroom, I would find Anyuta with my pants in one hand and a brush in the other.

"But Anyuta," I would say, "why go to so much trouble when the suit has just come back from the tailor?"

"That is all bourgeois suspicion and insult," she would cry. "I have always brushed clothes, and you are not going to stop me."

One morning Kotov put two hundred marked rubles into

one of my pockets. He did it on the advice of a militia detective, who stood downstairs waiting for a signal. When the pants were properly brushed, half of the money was gone. The detective searched Anyuta's room and found the one hundred rubles. She was taken to the station, where she was dismissed thanks to the intervention of the Servants' Union. Released from custody, Anyuta returned to the apartment and planted herself in the servant's room next to the kitchen, claiming right of possession by reason of long service. But that was not all. In retaliation for her arrest she spat in Kotov's face, beat up my housekeeper Manya, and drove her out of the house. I offered Anyuta a year's severance pay on condition that she withdraw her objection to Manya's return. Anyuta spurned the offer, warning that she would kill Manya if she came back. Under the circumstances I decided to move at no matter what cost.

Yagoda offered to help me. He had a list of apartments left vacant by victims of the terror. I told him to reserve this privilege for the foreign free-lancers who wrote paeans to Moscow for so-called liberal periodicals. For years they had plied their trade as "Soviet experts" on a meager income from abroad, pieced out by formidable subsidies from the GPU, while conscientious staff men like William Henry Chamberlin, Eugene Lyons, James Mills, and others remained poorly housed. Lyons finally got a home, but he was a long time getting it.

After weeks of vain search I finally decided to take at prohibitive cost one of the few Grand Hotel suites. I was all set to move there when Zinaida Reikh called my attention to some vacancies in two recently erected co-operative homes. The buildings were three blocks apart. Zinaida and her family had moved into one of them. The other, on Malý Palashovsky Pereulok, was built by a co-operative of highly paid Soviet engineers. They were in need of foreign currency for the purchase of installations unobtainable in Russia. For this reason they had reserved two vacancies for foreigners. By paying a three-year advance at the rate of \$225 monthly I secured a lease

on one of them. My Japanese friend Ogato moved into the other.

Madame Reikh did more than merely tip me off on the apartment. She had it decorated by one of her talented friends and went to Leningrad to select furniture from an auctioned-off palace. Thanks to Zinaida, the apartment on Maly Palashovsky became a sort of oasis—a pleasant rendezvous for artists, writers, officials, and humble peasants whose huts I was in the habit of visiting during my frequent rides through the countryside. In this American bourgeois home one could find celebrities of the Red capital rubbing shoulders with humble folk. Few communist homes in Moscow proffered such simple, democratic hospitality. Almost daily I had friends for dinner. Among the guests were dancers, singers, and musicians from the Grand Theater, only five blocks away. On the way from rehearsals they would drop in for rest and refreshments. They felt free to make themselves at home even when I was away on business. Many, who resumed her duties as housekeeper, enjoyed her role as hostess and made all comers happy with her simplicity of manner and readiness to serve.

In due time the apartment on Maly Palashovsky Pereulok became known as the "home of the ballet." Celebrities like Lyuba Bank, Victor Smoltsov, Gabovich, Messerer, and the younger artists like Vasilyeva, Shmelkina, Podryezkova, and Kuznyetsova would drop in after a performance. Occasionally they would bring with them their friends and admirers among Moscow's virtuosos. From time to time they would arrange musicales with members of the Moscow Stradivarius Quartet and with well-known pianists like Oborin. On New Year's Eve 1929 some thirty-odd artists of the ballet, opera, and theater staged a party in my home for their benefactor Yenukidze. Among the honored guests that evening were Madame Knipper, the famous star of the Art Theater and widow of Anton Chekhov, the Meyerholds, the ballet master Tikhomirov, and Vice-Commissar Karakhan.

Among the Americans who enjoyed visiting my new home

were Ivy Lee, the publicist, and Paul Cravath, the well-known New York lawyer, who had come to Moscow on business. Muscovites continued to avoid all social contacts with foreign diplomats and their friends. As in former years, I had to avoid so far as possible not only foreign diplomats but their intimates among the correspondents. To invite them to my home would mean losing many of my best Russian friends.

In the absence of an American Embassy in Moscow, visiting Americans in trouble would often turn to the AP for help. My "gratis" clientele ranged all the way from Theodore Dreiser to a stranded jazz band from Harlem. Hardly a week went by without some American ringing my doorbell in search of advice or assistance. Some came with letters of recommendation from friends abroad. Others were sent by Soviet officials, who never hesitated to ask a favor of the *Amerikansky advocat* (American lawyer). In obedience to a lifelong urge, I cheerfully served all comers except stranded American Communists and "Pinks."

My method of helping Americans in a jam was simple and more effective than that used by accredited diplomats. My usual approach to a case was to ascertain whether it had a non-political news angle. If so, all that had to be done was to write a good, hot story and take it to Podolsky the censor. In nine cases out of ten that worthy would get excited, threaten to throw it into the waste basket, and end by pleading for time. If the story happened to smell of scandal he would laughingly admit being caught off guard and get busy phoning superiors. Himself a hater of bureaucracy, Podolsky used to get a kick out of smashing through red tape. Unless the case presented exceptional difficulties, the authorities involved would usually compromise rather than face a scandal in the foreign press.

Thus, when Lu Wulfson, an American furrier married to a Russian girl, complained to me that the GPU refused to give his wife an exit visa, all I did was present the facts in a cable and take it to the censor. Podolsky merely glanced at the lead and instantly telephoned Lubyanka. The story had enough piquant details to hit the first pages of newspapers in the United States—

a country whose official aloofness remained a major Soviet problem.

The bride was Mura, daughter of an executed Tsarist officer. The husband was a wealthy American furrier dealing with the Soviet Fur Trust. The year before, Wulfson, after purchasing a million dollars worth of furs, had received permission to take his Soviet bride to New York. There, however, Amtorg refused to deliver the merchandise, which in a fortnight had nearly doubled in price. Wulfson sued in a New York court and was awarded damages. On his return to Moscow a year later, the Soviet Fur Trust refused to deal with him, and the GPU denied his wife an exit visa although she was armed with a declaration of intention to become an American citizen. My cable setting forth the pertinent details was referred to the GPU Collegium. A day later Mrs. Wulfson was permitted to leave Russia.

Theodore Dreiser was one of a number of foreign notables invited to the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the Revolution. The Kremlin paid all of their travel expenses, expecting, no doubt, to reap a rich harvest of publicity. But by the time Dreiser reached Moscow his hosts were so busy liquidating Trotskyism that they had little time for entertaining guests. I received a telegram from our Paris bureau informing me that Dreiser had sent an explosive wire to a friend in Paris, threatening to leave Russia immediately in protest against shabby treatment. Our people in Paris suggested that I see Dreiser and find out what it was all about.

I found the famous novelist in one of the worst rooms of the poorly managed Grand Hotel. He complained of the lack of heat, a mouse in the bathtub, insects in the bedding, vile food, an ugly female interpreter who was a "clumsy spy," abominable hotel service, and a cold in the head.

"But never mind all that," said he. "These are mere trifles. The important thing is that they lured me here on false pretenses. My object in coming to Moscow was to write a book on Russia. The Soviet agents in New York assured me that I could

see and interview the biggest men, not barring Stalin. I sold the idea to my publishers, and here I have been shut up in this cell for days without seeing a soul. You came here, I take it, because I wired a friend who knows the AP crowd in Paris. Now, unless the Bolos live up to their promise, I shall go back to New York at once and lambast hell out of them!"

I urged Dreiser to go ahead, but he was reluctant. He had heard of my contacts in Moscow and asked whether I could not intervene.

"Not in a diplomatic way," I said. "The most I can do is write a story with plenty of quotes, take it to the censor, and see what happens."

Dreiser agreed. It was half-past nine in the evening. We prepared the story and I took it to Podolsky's home before midnight, figuring that he would report the matter to Chicherin sometime during the night. My calculations were not amiss. About two in the morning Chicherin's secretary phoned saying the commissar wanted to see me immediately.

Chicherin was grateful for the cable. He considered Dreiser one of the outstanding American friends of Soviet Russia and thought Moscow could ill afford to alienate him. He telephoned Mrs. Litvinov and Mrs. Kamenev, getting both ladies out of bed at 3:00 A.M. and urging them to visit Dreiser first thing in the morning and arrange a number of interviews for him at the Kremlin. After phoning the ladies, Chicherin suggested that I invite a number of Soviet writers to meet their American colleague. A few days later Dreiser was at my home in the company of Asseyev, Katayev, Alyoshin, Tretyakov, Erdman, and other famous Russians.

During his stay in Moscow, Dreiser rarely missed a performance of the ballet. On leaving, he told me that he considered the Moscow Ballet the world's greatest achievement in scenic art.

In the first flush of their triumph over Trotsky, Stalin's henchmen sought to give Moscow the appearance of a gay, happy capital. Accordingly, they imported a number of foreign

attractions, including burlesque movies from Hollywood and a jazz band from Harlem. For many weeks the *Negrityane* had been all the rage in the capital. At a Foreign Office ball the elite danced to their music, and for ordinary folk they played at theaters. Everywhere the handsome *brunyeti* were lionized by Russian women. Before long all Moscow was gossiping about "Kremlin dames committing adultery with the blacks." It was said that in one home in the Kremlin a jealous commissar shot his wife after her rendezvous with a Negro. This report was followed with rumors of a concerted move to expel the band—a move backed by powerful officials alarmed at the prospect of embarrassingly deep-hued accretions to their families. At this point the Harlem musicians turned to the AP for help. They called to tell me that the authorities who had been paying their salaries and expenses at the Grand Hotel seemed to have vanished. As a result of this disappearing act, a routine matter in Soviet institutions, the manager of the hotel had threatened the players with eviction and refused them food. I invited them over and found them hungry and downhearted after a sleepless night.

"We're anxious to leave this damn place," said the leader, "but we haven't got the carfare back to New York. No passports, no money, and they tell us the guy who got us here's way off in Siberia."

I telephoned a friend at Amtorg. He looked into the matter and phoned back that the contract with the men was at an end. They were entitled to railway and steamship tickets, but first they must pay back the advances in foreign currency given them during their stay. According to the Amtorg spokesman the musicians had spent their money on lady friends. The men readily admitted the charge, which didn't help any. Again, as on previous occasions, I dashed off a cable and told Kotov to take it to the Foreign Office. I then went with my guests to the Grand Hotel and arranged with the manager to supply them with food and shelter for the time being, undertaking to pay the bill if need be. To avoid complications I joined them for dinner.

At the table I could not take my eyes off the trombone player. His large, handsome mulatto face seemed familiar. I knew I had seen him somewhere. He, too, kept staring at me.

"Where do you come from?" I asked him, finally.

"New York."

"New York—where?"

"Harlem."

"Whereabouts?"

"Seventh Avenue and 134th Street."

"Do you know the Municipal Laundry?"

"They've been doing my laundry for years."

"And I ironed your big, stiff-bosomed shirts," I reminded him.

He stared at me with suddenly dilated eyes. Way back in my student days, when I ironed shirts for a living, this trombonist had been my principal "pain in the neck." His shirts were the biggest and hardest to do, and he was so particular about his pleats that one sultry Saturday he threatened to slash my throat when I refused to re-pleat one of them. Now he was almost hysterical as he recalled the incident. He begged a laughing forgiveness, which I readily granted with a toast to good old Harlem. Next morning the head of the Press Department informed me that my cable about the Negroes was being held up, pending efforts by the Foreign Office to "smooth out the misunderstanding." Before the day was over, the musicians had their visaed passports, their fare to New York, and enough money to cover all expenses en route.

Among those pleading for help were naturalized American Reds and "Pinks" who had come back to Russia in the hope of finding happiness in Stalin's paradise. The first thing they did on arrival in Moscow was to surrender their American passports together with their dollar savings. Their "homecoming" was thus attended with outright loot by the Soviet Government, for at the height of inflation the Gossbank paid them no more than the official rate of one ruble and ninety-four kopeks per dollar. This at a time when one hundred rubles wouldn't

buy a single dollar bill on the black market—when a two-course meal in a Moscow restaurant cost one hundred rubles.

In many cases this robbery was but a foretaste of years of torment. Before long the re-naturalized, like all other Soviet citizens under suspicion, had to submit to daily search on the way out of their shops, to starvation wages, shabby clothes, existence with their families in tiny, vermin-infested rooms—if they were lucky enough to get rooms. If not, they had to be content with living space in suburban barracks which were not much better than Russian cattle barns. To top it all, after years of American freedom, these miserable repatriates were being trailed by spies and *provocateurs*. They tried hard, in their despair, to leave the country. Many of them, unable to get back their passports, came pleading to me for help. With the exception of one Bulgarian, who somehow aroused my sympathy, I refused to lift a finger for any of them. As I listened to their abject pleas I would recall their type back home, the warped characters who, in their ignorance and villainy, hated everything American and sang hymns to the slave state ruled by the GPU.

Chapter 21

Stalin Moves Against the Rights

NINETEEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-eight and 1929 were perhaps the most crucial years of the Russian Revolution. It was during those years that idealistic bolshevism gave way to outright gangsterism, of which Dzhugashvili-Stalin was the center and the symbol. In those years I had occasion to hear some of the oldest and most esteemed Bolsheviks reminisce on Stalin's character and his past—his foul play with comrades while in or out of prison, his expulsion from the Social Democratic Party of Tiflis, where an underground revolutionary tribunal found him guilty of espionage and *provocateur* work. The prevailing theme of conversation at the Kremlin was the Secretary's everlasting intrigues, his unquenchable thirst for power, his appalling cruelty, and, most dangerous of all, his innate, utterly disarming obsequiousness. These traits, coupled with a perfect readiness to fulfill promises when it didn't interfere with his purposes, made him no less dangerous to potential or fancied foes than to real ones.

The more I think of those days, the deadlier seems to me the parallel between Stalin's conduct in 1928-29 and his dealings with Roosevelt, Churchill, and Truman at Teheran, Yalta, and

Potsdam. Substitute Hitler for Trotsky; compare the urgent need of liquidating nazism with that of ending Trotskyist opposition; put Roosevelt, Churchill, and Truman in the roles of the three top Rightists—Rykov, Bukharin, and Tomsy; leave Stalin as he is; and the parallel is complete, with but one difference. On the international scene this not-too-brilliant Georgian managed to deceive and befuddle two American Presidents and a British Prime Minister. In Moscow he only outmaneuvered three party comrades laboring under the constant threat of GPU terror.

Up to about 1928 the Rights at the Kremlin had with them not only the general staff of the army but also a vast majority of the officers' corps as well as the soldiers, who were recruited largely from among peasants whose cause the Rights had championed throughout the Revolution. Even War Commissar Voroshilov, though a creature of Stalin, was in no position to challenge either the strategists at the top or the peasant mass at the bottom of the Red Army. This weakness in his armor Stalin had long since decided to overcome by a gradual increase of the special GPU army which was completely in his control.

For nearly two years now this army was being forged under pressure of such compelling events as 150 widely scattered peasant rebellions—a figure given to me by Yagoda. On Stalin's personal orders, and on pretext of the danger involved in sending peasant soldiers against peasant rebels, this "army of special assignment" had been recruited largely from the millions of "wild" children—gamins who had never known the warmth of home or parental love. The majority of the Cheka soldiers were boys from GPU-ruined homes who had learned in their earliest youth to steal, rob, murder, and to live the lives of bandits generally. Millions of them had been roaming over Russia's fields, forests, and streets for years. Many of them had perished, but those who survived were ideally suited for Stalin's schemes. Themselves victims of appalling brutality, youngsters of this type could easily be trained in espionage, *provocateur* work, and private murder. They could be relied on to form privileged

divisions not unlike the *oprichina* of Peter the Great—an armed force which in the seventeenth century decimated the boyars. As long as this special army was unable to challenge the regulars, Stalin continued to play his old game of friendly collaboration and even, at times, obsequiousness with the Rights. As late as April 1928 he still pretended to be on an even footing with them. But during the summer of that year his militarized police reached the proportions of a formidable army, considerably better equipped, better fed, and better housed than the regular one. Fully in command of this nineteenth-century oprichina, Stalin decided to attack the Rights and do them in—with their own help—exactly as he had done in the Trotskyists. Yet he did not rush things. Why? Could it have been for fear of this handful of hesitant Moderates who had time and again yielded to his demands? In command now of a fully militarized GPU, in complete control of the Soviet press, with his fingertips on the nerve center of every cell in the party, what was there to stop Stalin from making short shrift of all opposition? Why, after eliminating Trotsky, did he have to go through the same routine of isolation, slander, arrest, capitulation, “confession,” in dealing with the Rights? What was there behind his year-long campaign against the “perils from the Right,” the “Rightist deviation,” etc.? Was it sheer sadism, a dictator’s whim, or was there a solid reason behind these patiently gradual tactics?

The answer to these questions is that Stalin, a superb organizer, was fully aware that in his march towards dictatorship he had reached a point where the latent forces behind the men he attacked were more dangerous than the men. It was no longer a question of Rykov, Bukharin, or any other party leader or group. The problem looming on the horizon was Russia’s hundred million peasants. It was simple enough to remove or arrest—not yet to execute—the Right-wing leaders. But without them how was one to make the peasantry co-operate in the gigantic task of turning primitive Russia into a modern industrial nation capable of holding its own in the capitalist world? The task

was, specifically, to make the peasant furnish the raw materials necessary for a big industry at home and, simultaneously, to raise exportable grain sufficient to pay for the import of foreign industrial equipment. Stalin knew too well that, with all its power, his Apparatus could never make the peasants co-operate. It remained to cajole or compel the Rights into helping him in this inhuman task. Only after failing in his efforts to secure their voluntary co-operation did Stalin decide to compel it. He began by staging the famous judicial farce known as the Shakhta trial.

The immediate victims of this elaborate performance were fifty-one mining engineers and technicians accused of sabotage. But its real object was to undermine the prestige of the Rights, to publicize the "ineptitude" of their rule, and thus to shift the blame for Russia's ills from his followers to his adversaries. One of Stalin's standard techniques is to charge his enemies with the sum total of intrigues, crimes, and incompetence for which he and his henchmen are responsible. With Trotsky out of the way, he was urgently in need of new scapegoats on whom to unload the responsibility for longer working hours, dwindling food rations, and the steady deterioration of the whole Soviet fabric. The fifty-one engineers were of momentary significance. Behind them stood the Right Bolsheviks who were still the official government of Russia. Thus, without any previous warning, there appeared in the Soviet press one day an announcement of the coming trial together with an outline of the indictment.

After cabling a summary of the document, I examined its legal aspects and found it to be a mixture of nonsense and flagrant lies. Friends among the Rights, who knew too well that they were the real defendants in the case, informed me that the indictment was the handiwork of Stalin and a former Menshevik lawyer Vishinsky, now a convert to Stalinism. Only politicians with a background of insolent intrigue and utter contempt for truth could have had the gall to assert that for four long years, that is, for the duration of the Right-wing rule, Soviet coal miners had been systematically beaten and starved

without this fact being noticed either by the GPU or by the party.

The indicted engineers were accused of flooding mines, of wrecking machinery, of stealing workers' pay, of dooming thousands to hunger in squalid hovels, and finally of crippling the mines and the whole Soviet industry in furtherance of a Paris-inspired counterrevolutionary plot to overthrow the Soviet Government. Such, briefly, was the accusation. On this foundation they proceeded to stage a pseudo trial that dragged on for nearly two months.

Day in and day out I sat in the House of Columns watching the accused compete with their prosecutor in an effort to prove their own guilt.

Krylenko, the Attorney General of the Soviet Republic, did the accusing. He played to the gallery from start to finish. A stump speaker of the soapbox variety, he never missed a chance to harangue the police-picked audience and draw their applause. There were times when some of the defendants applauded along with the cheering crowd. And never once was the prosecutor checked either by the presiding judge or by the defending counsel, some of whom were celebrities of the pre-revolutionary Moscow bar. Their presence, purely a matter of form, served only to enhance the scenic effects of the specially built and artificially lighted judicial dais, which was large enough to hold the fifty-one defendants, three judges, the prosecutor and his staff, a dozen lawyers, half a dozen stenographers, and a large detachment of GPU guards armed with rifles and fixed bayonets.

The presiding judge Andrei Vishinsky was a novice at the time. It was his debut in a long series of farces in which he soon changed his role from judge to prosecutor.

During the first intermission, following the reading of the indictment, one of the lawyers in the case gave me Vishinsky's case history. Before the Revolution he had been a shyster lawyer with a flair for twisting legal phrases. For some time he was a hanger-on in the criminal courts, defending Moscow's pimps

and thieving prostitutes. Then he joined the Social Democratic Party and was active in their ranks until the outbreak of the Revolution, when he disappeared and was not heard from until the winter of 1927-28. At that time Stalin, who was always fond of court dramatics, found himself in need of a juridical charlatan. A canvass of what was left of the legal profession in Moscow revealed few lawyers willing to ghost for Stalin in the shameful Shakhta business. After a long search the Apparat came upon Vishinsky.

In reward for his labors in preparing the ground for this first grand-scale frame-up, Vishinsky was appointed presiding judge at the trial. In this capacity the shoddy jurist did his utmost. Behind the scenes he prompted the helpless defendants in acting their assigned roles, while on the stage he gave them ample opportunity to besmirch themselves with treason, to wallow in counterrevolutionary mud before a hand-picked gloating public, and to accuse themselves and their co-defendants of unimaginable crimes.

It was at the Shakhta trial that Vishinsky first introduced the method of so-called "direct juridical procedure," calculated to convince those wanting to be convinced in and out of the courtroom. A defendant would no sooner reveal some glaring detail than Vishinsky would call on everyone involved in the statement to face the accuser and back up his accusation. Day after day the presiding judge was hard at work, weaving in open court a work of clumsy fiction. As the proceedings progressed, Vishinsky seemed more and more pleased with himself, with his obedient performers, and with the sadistically cheering crowd.

For about a fortnight the Stalinist jurist enjoyed smooth sailing. Then, the memories of the accused began to snap, causing wide cracks in the rising structure of the frame-up. In moments of embarrassment Vishinsky would get out from under by declaring a recess. In due time these intermissions came to be known as "rehearsals."

The poor memories of the accused proved to be but one of

Vishinsky's troubles. Another difficulty was the refusal of all the German defendants and of one Russian Jew to admit guilt. The attitude of the Germans was understandable. Unlike their defenseless Soviet colleagues, they had behind them the protection of their fatherland, which from the very beginning let it be known that punishment of its nationals would bring swift reprisals. But the lone, brave Jew played havoc with the whole show. Gurevich was his name. He was a mining engineer, aged seventy-four. In all of that abyss of villainy and lies Gurevich remained an incarnation of truth and human decency. Time and again this individual defied Vishinsky, saying: "I have lived my life. You can have me shot, but you cannot make me lie." It was thrilling to watch the calm and fearless man. Against that black background of infamy, Gurevich stood out as a symbol of the ancient grandeur of his people. Before this single gallant captive, Stalin and his brood, in all of their brutal might, seemed helpless. Gurevich was the last defiant prisoner to appear in an open Soviet court. In all the Cheka frame-ups of later years they took care to weed out all men likely to prefer death to dishonor.

There were other outstanding Russian engineers facing the Shakhta tribunal. Some of them were as old as Gurevich. Yet they gave false testimony against themselves and others. "Why?" I asked people who knew them.

"Because they have wives, children," was the answer. "They lie to save their flesh and blood. Gurevich is single."

After the first month the show became tedious, the lies monotonous by repetition, and the acting atrocious. I assigned an assistant to do the rest of the coverage. Towards the end of the trial, however, I came back to watch Krylenko sum up. With but an hour's interruption for lunch, the obviously psychopathic prosecutor raved from ten in the morning until sunset. It was a stump speech delivered by a bald-headed little man with feverish gray eyes blazing with anger. Towards the end of his ten-hour harangue, the prosecutor was actually foaming at the mouth. After a day of screaming platitudes, Krylenko

took up the task of citing individual guilt and recommending penalties. By that time he was too exhausted to speak with coherence. He had reached a state of frenzy where he spat words of venom, hurling them at his victims in a fit of raving madness. As if carried away by a lust for murder, he demanded death for every defendant, punctuating each demand with the shriek: "*Razstryel!*" (Shooting!) and smacking his lips as if enjoying in advance the sight of the anticipated carnage. The last on the long list of defendants was a young engineer who came to his doom dressed in the full uniform of his profession. Staring madly at the victim, Krylenko yelled: "Comrades! Judges! Look at this beast in uniform. . . . *Razstryel!*"

After an hour's recess, Vishinsky announced the verdict dictated by the Apparat. It seemed surprisingly mild to those unaware of the meaning and ultimate purpose of the Shakhta trial. Only five of the defendants were sentenced to death. The rest came off with prison terms of from five to ten years. The Germans were freed.

As the prisoners were being taken from court, I saw an old man, one of the five about to die, smile and wave to someone in the audience. I turned back. In a loge to the rear were relatives of the doomed. They all wept, making the sign of the cross. The most pitiful among them was a gray-haired old woman dressed in mourning. She was waving a white handkerchief with one hand while crossing herself with the other. Her bluish lips moved as if in silent prayer. Presently, tears gushed from her dim eyes, streaming down her waxen, wrinkled face. I turned back to the platform. It was by now almost deserted. The condemned and their guards were nearly all gone. But at the open backstage door the old man still lingered. He kept waving to the woman in mourning and blowing kisses to her. The soldier behind him moved a step back, grounded his rifle, and stood still with bowed head.

The movement towards the exits slowed down as people paused to watch the lone prisoner eager to prolong his last look at a dear face. Obviously the woman in mourning was his wife

about to be widowed by the GPU executioner. It was an awesome, breath-taking spectacle. A deadly hush descended on the hitherto noisy, marble-walled hall.

On their way out people stopped to look at the old couple on the threshold of death. All eyes were moist. Some of the spectators wept profusely, among them not a few who but a short while ago had cheered the sadistic prosecutor. One look at the deathly pale old man and his wife sufficed to awaken pity in their hearts. For some moments the whole brutal process of terror seemed to have come to a halt. Even the Chekists watched the heart-tearing scene in awed silence. Then the commander of the guard came in from outside, where a big prison van could be seen through the open doorway. Still smiling, the doomed man waved once more to his wife, and she waved back to him with an expression saying: "Good-by, beloved, we shall soon meet."

The Shakhta trial was but one detail or symptom of an advancing crisis. Other signs of a steadily deteriorating situation were: the rapid fall of the ruble, the introduction of ration cards, a new increase in unemployment, longer queues for bread, a hunger riot in which several mounted militiamen were dragged off their horses and beaten to death. Yet, despite the scarcity of food, clothing, and every other essential, the supply of vodka was more plentiful than ever, causing an all-time high in crime, debauchery, and prostitution. The Apparatus, far from fighting these evils, was making a quite obvious effort to stimulate the process of moral degeneration. The reason for adopting this tactic was threefold: First, Stalin, in command now of a strong GPU army able to resist the regulars, could rely on demoralization rather than terror in preparing the downfall of the Rights. Second, widespread dissipation and its attendant evils could easily be laid at the door of a government whose head was a well-known drinker. Third, debauchery, crime, and prostitution were convenient distractions at a time when Stalin was about to amputate the right arm of the ruling party.

On the surface, the political orientation at the Kremlin remained unchanged. Stalin proceeded, as usual, with the utmost caution. To avoid all risk, he feigned weakness at the very moment of triumph. Right after the Shakhta trial in the summer of 1928 he gave in to the demand of the Rights that he stop the terror in the countryside, suspend the compulsory "buying" of grain, and put an end to espionage by village correspondents. That was in August. A month later the Soviet press was ablaze with an all-out campaign against the "Right deviation." No one could doubt any longer that Stalin was in full command of an adequate army of his own. Henceforth, every man in the government party would be under close observation by Stalin's spies. As in his campaign against Trotskyists, Stalin was in complete charge of the espionage conducted by his friend Ordzhonokidze, the mystery man of the Kremlin. A member of the Politburo, Ordzhonokidze had for years played friend to all oppositionists, both Left and Right. In his intimate talks with them he had pretended to despise Stalin. On the occasion of a split in the Politburo, Ordzhonokidze would side with Stalin's antagonists and sometimes go so far as to vote with them. But now, as the time approached for a final showdown, it was learned that he had left Moscow "on the advice of doctors." For years the Rights, like the Trotskyists before them, had put their trust in Ordzhonokidze. At this late moment they discovered that he had been Stalin's principal *provocateur*, planted in the Kremlin for the sole purpose of keeping him informed of the doings of his opponents.

In November 1928, after two months of preparatory propaganda against the Rights, Stalin finally decided to open the attack in person. In a published speech he stated to the Central Committee of the party that the industrialization and collectivization of Russia were well under way and that this was being accomplished despite antagonism from the "Right deviation." The speech had a threefold purpose: to intimidate the Rights, to rouse the Russian youth with the spirit of battle

for a gigantic industry aiming to "overtake and surpass" the capitalist nations, to stir hope in the hearts of the unscrupulous, who were to supplant those on the way out.

The speech was also a signal to the press and to the Apparatus to intensify their campaign against the doomed men. As on previous occasions, the party machine sprang into action at a word from the boss. For another eight months the air over Russia rang with battle cries against the "anti-Leninists on the Right." In July 1929, Bukharin was expelled from the Executive Committee of the Third International. A month later *Pravda* opened a personal campaign against him and his colleagues, Rykov and Tomsy. In November the Soviet press branded the Premier and his friends as "counterrevolutionary criminals" and demanded their drastic punishment. At this juncture Stalin stepped in with a pose of "magnanimity." In the face of a howling demand by his mobsters for vigorous action, he merely expelled Bukharin from the Politburo and let Rykov and Tomsy off with a reprimand. Having publicized this reprimand without evoking any dangerous reaction, he gave the signal for a new attack demanding "capitulation." This led to the day when Rykov, Bukharin, and Tomsy were compelled to acknowledge their mistakes publicly or "face the consequences." It meant a choice between self-repudiation or placing their families and friends in jeopardy. Like many others caught in the GPU net, the three leaders and many of their followers confessed their ideological sins, thus attesting Stalin's lordship over an Apparatus-dominated country.

The Sunday following Rykov's *mea culpa* lingers in memory. I went to the Premier's for dinner and remained with him until late that night. At three in the morning Alexei Ivanovich was still reminiscing. In his despair over the present and the immediate future, his mind sought refuge in the past when, together with Lenin and other comrades, he had planned and labored for a Russia redeemed from tyranny. Never a careerist, invariably selfless, the Premier realized only too late that by

helping Stalin fight the Trotskyist menace he had reared a monster who would plunge the country into untold misery and build a tyranny to overshadow that of Ivan the Terrible.

"Only a year back," Rykov sighed, "we still had the situation in hand. Even six months ago we could have forced a showdown and won. But there was always the haunting fear of an interparty fight turning into a civil war. And now it is too late."

Although officially still head of the Soviet Government, still a member of the Politburo, the Premier knew that he was powerless. His position was false. He wanted to get away from it all, but now even resignation was no longer in his power. Henceforth he and his colleagues would have to toe the "general line." Having publicly repented of their "sins," they were as helpless as any other Soviet subjects in disfavor with the ruling gang.

Forlorn and desolate, Rykov speculated vainly on what might have been had the Rights taken a different course from the very beginning. He recalled an all-night session of the Central Committee in 1917 when he, Krassin, and others took issue with Lenin on a motion to disperse the constituent assembly.

"I repeat," said Rykov, "what I have told you time and again. The moderate Bolsheviks supported the October insurrection as a preventive move against Tsarist restoration. As soon as that danger was over we resumed the fight against our party's monopoly of power, seeing in it a new tyranny in the making."

He recalled that in the deliberations of those hectic days even Lenin had hesitated. He, too, saw the perils of civil war looming on the horizon, but, unlike the Moderates, he believed that a communist revolution in Germany was at hand. The corollary to a German upheaval was a revolution engulfing all Western Europe. It took Lenin four years to recognize his mistake officially by proclaiming his New Economic Policy. Unofficially, he admitted long before that that he had erred grievously in banking on a quick world revolution.

The Premier recalled intimate moments with Lenin, when the founder of bolshevism had been appalled by the horrors of military communism and had gone so far as to concede that fear

of its spread beyond Russia's frontiers was a powerful deterrent to world revolution. Thus, a onetime major revolutionary asset had turned out to be a heavy liability.

The Kronstadt revolt, too, had given Lenin pause, he said. But Trotsky and Stalin failed to grasp its significance. "To both of them," said Rykov, "freedom and democracy were counter-revolutionary terms."

Contempt for the people, the Premier believed, explained the shameful conduct of Trotsky's followers. Barely three months after their leader's exile, leading Trotskyists in exile were negotiating terms of surrender with Stalin's agents. And Stalin, having made Trotsky's policy his own, was anxious to placate the Trotskyists while keeping their leader in exile. This utter amorality of a certain brand of Communists was not new to Rykov. It all stemmed from brutal nihilism and a false philosophic concept of "dialectic"—an elastic term, presenting as Marxist dogma the teaching that the end justifies every and any means.

Speaking of the "Right deviation," the Premier summed up in a few memorable words the fundamentals of the program of the moderate Bolsheviks.

"A people hungry, in rags, and homeless cannot compete with highly developed industrial countries like America. Our advocates of heavy industry never tire of stressing the danger of war and the necessity of preparedness. My answer to them is: If the capitalists are really out to destroy us they won't wait until we have built up our industry. On the other hand if we, a backward people, stop playing at world revolution and organize our national life on the pattern of our traditional rural *mir*, the capitalist world will have no cause to fear us. On the contrary, it will be to their interest to supply Russia with arms, or even to join us if we are attacked by Japan or Germany."

The short summer night was already gone when Rykov drew a sheet of paper from a drawer. It was Stalin's abandoned agreement to a Right-wing demand for a wide extension of NEP.

"But how could one man . . . ?" I began for the hundredth time. The Premier threw up his hands. It was one question to

which he, like most of his colleagues, could never give a clear answer. At times they would blame themselves. At other times they would point to conditions which seemed beyond human control. This time Rykov, after some reflection, reduced the whole complex cause to the paralyzing effect of widespread espionage.

"Right now," he said, "you couldn't get together in Moscow half a dozen men who would dare speak their minds unafraid of *provocateurs*. We can't even warn Stalin for his own good. Things have reached a pass where he is entangled in the net of his own misdeeds. Having driven the bulk of the peasants and workers to desperation, he is forced to proceed with his program or face a crisis which will destroy him. With little credit abroad, Stalin has made large-scale commitments. They will have to be met through heavy exports from a famished land. Unofficially, he is already going ahead with a scheme which is likely to bring greater horrors than those of the civil war."

In less than a year Rykov's words proved to have been prophetic. Three years later they paled into insignificance beside the stark reality.

Early that summer I had frequent occasion to meet Bukharin and Tomsky at Rykov's home. One Sunday, I found the Right leaders in a state bordering on panic. They were discussing a stormy meeting of the Politburo, at which Bukharin had called Stalin a "Genghis Khan," yelling, "Comrades, I warn you he will strangle us all."

Bukharin was a small man with a large, round, open face, a blond, sparse beard, and an unusually wide forehead topping a pair of blue, ever smiling eyes. They smiled even when he was on the platform expounding Marxian learning. Bukharin's beard and his gentle manner were typical of a Russian deacon. He was for that reason nicknamed the "Marxian Bishop." In everyday life this Right leader was one of those astonishingly frank Russians who, as the saying goes, "wear their souls un-

buttoned." To a chance acquaintance such people are apt to blurt out their innermost secrets. How a man so frank could have been a member of the secretive Politburo remains one of the many Kremlin riddles.

The greatest theorist after Lenin, and his spiritual heir, Bukharin was in everyday life as naïve as a child. Years before I had seen him take his place in a long queue waiting for railway tickets. It was unethically, he felt, to order a ticket over the telephone when simple folk had to stand in line for one. A member of the Politburo and editor-in-chief of *Pravda*, Bukharin adhered to a strictly proletarian line of conduct. He dressed and ate like a workman, lived in one room, and went about his daily business on foot, never using an automobile unless under pressure of urgent business.

Before and after Lenin's death Stalin catered to Bukharin, rarely missing an opportunity to extol his Marxian learning. Eager to remain on good terms with his scholarly colleague, the Georgian pretended to accept Bukharin's agrarian policy as expressed in the latter's slogan: "Peasants, get rich!" This motto, summing up the Right agrarian platform in three words, was anathema to both Trotsky and Stalin. Yet, as long as the Secretary was in need of support from the Moderates, he went along with this slogan, pleading a shortage of food in the army and industrial districts in justification of his violence in the countryside.

On that Sunday, Bukharin told me what had happened between him and Stalin at the session of the Politburo. Confronted by Bukharin with the charge of organizing a "counterrevolutionary" army and restoring serfdom, Stalin yelled: "Liar!" Whereupon Bukharin accused him of sycophancy and appalling sadism. Stalin flew into a rage, yelling: "You lie. . . . You say all this to arouse the whole party against me." It was then that Bukharin called him a Genghis Khan. There followed a scene which threatened to get out of hand and compelled Rykov, who was presiding, to cut short the deliberations of Russia's Sanhedrin.

Chapter 22

Horrors Attending Stalin's First Five-Year Plan

IN LAUNCHING HIS FIRST FIVE-Year Plan, Stalin aimed primarily at building a war industry. To make any headway he had to revert to military communism, which meant an undeclared civil war. In this war against an aroused people, the dictator relied on the support of the youth. With few exceptions, however, they refused in the beginning to go against their elders. Stalin then gave the green light to his shock brigades of "wild children," who had reached military age.

Inflamed with savage propaganda and heavily armed, this twentieth-century oprichina was let loose on an unarmed people. It struck with the impact of a pitiless alien foe, invading simultaneously the countryside and the industrial districts.

Long before the official announcement of the first Five-Year Plan, Russia rang with the songs and wild cries of these youthful shock brigades, "marching towards the socialist goal" and "storming reactionary strongholds." In the villages this "storming of strongholds" meant uprooting the last vestiges of home, family, and individual enterprise. In the cities it meant introducing a grueling sweatshop system under the slogan of "pro-

letarian emulation." The press blared out challenges to factories, industries, and entire farm regions to "fulfill and surpass" their quotas. The abominably housed, undernourished, ragged workers were urged to follow the example of a certain widely publicized Stakhanov—a skilled mechanic who could outswear the fastest sweatshop worker. Before long it became obvious that the ensuing spurt in production, though large in individual cases, was not general. The bulk of the workers and peasants resented this slave-driving system and turned against the shock brigadiers, who began to be beaten and killed in forests, fields, and factories. After a few months of brigadiering, many of the youngsters lost their enthusiasm for "storming reactionary strongholds." To rouse them again, the Apparatus proclaimed: "Let there be joy! Let our youth rejoice in the building of socialism!" This slogan, trumpeted in press and from the platform, produced unforeseen results. It gave impetus to an already widespread debauchery. From all over the country came reports of unbridled revelry, riot, and crime. During the New Year celebrations of 1928, there occurred in the environs of Moscow some forty-odd murders committed at savage orgies. The Tass bulletins brought similar news from the provinces.

But there was no outcry against "criminal rejoicing" as in the days of the NEP. No one dared say a word against orgies sponsored by the Apparatus. Even the highest police officials were afraid to interfere with a criminal night life in which powerful Apparatchiks set the pace.

Tverskaya, Moscow's main thoroughfare, and the boulevards were swarming with teen-age prostitutes. In the absence of housing space available for brothels, the girls, some of them mere children, plied their trade on park lawns, in hallways, and in back yards. From all over the country came alarming reports of a rapid increase in vice coupled with warnings against widespread venereal diseases. Rapes, almost unheard of until that summer, became daily events. And everywhere vice went hand in hand with drunkenness.

No one dared utter a word against this nationwide jamboree

until there occurred an incident that must have shocked even the chief instigator of it. Early one evening a group of eighteen shock brigadiers frolicking in a Leningrad park raped a passing fourteen-year-old girl. She happened to be the daughter of a highly influential Stalinist. On the following morning the whole Soviet press was aflame with righteous anger. Under command of the Apparatus, newspapers in Moscow and Leningrad ran front-page headlines: "Death to the Hooligans!" Previous reports of rapes by brigadiers had gone unnoticed. But when the vodka-happy "builders of socialism" struck an Apparatchik's daughter they were promptly shot, every one of them, on the morrow of their "joy." Even those among them who, according to undisputed evidence, were mere eyewitnesses of the outrage paid the death penalty.

It was during this officially sponsored epidemic of joy that I cabled The Associated Press an eyewitness story of a suicide pact which revealed the powers and privileges of Stalin's parvenu aristocracy.

One night while watching a ballet I saw two ballerinas plunge to their death from an upper structure in the rear of the stage. In the last act of *Sleeping Beauty*, in the midst of the crowded, twilight scene which portrays the sleeping princess in her domain at sea, the girls jumped from high up, hitting the middle of the darkened stage. Only those who sat near and were familiar with the plot were aware of it. Fyer, the conductor of the orchestra, managed by frantic efforts to draw out the brass and drums and turn a crescendo into a deafening roar. All at once the hitherto gracefully waltzing ensemble went into a mad whirl.

I left my seat. Bending low, I tiptoed to the nearest exit. The people were still watching the show, unaware of the tragedy. For some fleeting moments I thought I must be imagining things. But out in the corridor I saw two uniformed Chekists running towards the stage. I followed them through the open door and into the wings. There I ran into old Alexandrovsky, manager of the Grand Theater, whom I had met occasionally

at Meyerhold's. The old man was deathly pale and trembling.

"You here!" he exclaimed. "For God's sake go away. I am afraid of you."

While saying this he grasped my arm and held on. Then he begged for water. I helped him to a near-by dressing room and got back to the stage just as they rang down the curtain. There, in the midst of panic, confusion, and much weeping, lay the two bodies of the ballerinas in a pool of blood, their hands tied together with ribbons.

The women wept in silence, unable or unwilling to talk, but some of the male dancers assured me it was a suicide. They seemed to know or guess the motive. Vitya, a star and close friend, suggested that I go with him to a dressing room. There a young ballerina repeated what she had told him earlier in the evening. Together with the suicides she had attended a party at the home of a commissar whom she refused to name for fear of consequences. There was much drinking and debauchery during the night. Both girls were raped. They did not go home from the party. Instead, they came to the theater where they remained all day. During the intermission they told her that they had no intention of going home that night, or ever.

I telephoned the censor to ask him what chance there was of cabling the story. "In that version, none," was the curt reply. But there were other versions. According to one of them both girls were in love with the composer Glière. Friends since childhood, they decided to die together rather than compete for their idol's love. Even this innocuously romantic story the censor held back for a day. The suicide shook the Kremlin. Stalin himself took pains to investigate. Weeks after I had cabled the romantic version, Yenukidze informed me that the rape story was true. He also told me that those responsible for the outrage escaped with a reprimand by reason of their close contacts with the Apparat.

The death of the two dancers before a packed theater passed unnoticed in the Moscow press. Yet a few weeks later the Soviet newspapers were wet with tears over the rape and alleged

suicide of a youthful poetess who happened to be the wife of a Georgian commissar in Stalin's intimate entourage. There were well-founded rumors that the poetess—a habitué of Moscow's literary Bohemia—had been hostess at a scandalous party. According to one report she herself had provoked the "rape" and was killed by her husband in a fit of jealousy. Again, as in Leningrad, there was a hue and cry over the "capitalist decadence" among Soviet youth, the urgent need to halt the further spread of vice by exemplary punishment of those guilty of driving the poetess to "suicide."

Before a packed auditorium, a revolutionary tribunal listened for days to the testimony of witnesses, to the "confessions" of three youthful poets, and to long-winded speeches by a woman prosecutor. The three accused, one of them the talented poet Altschuler, were found guilty and sentenced to three years in prison.

The trial was a striking demonstration of the power and influence of Stalin's close friends. Yet, far from checking vice, it had the effect of stimulating it. Orgies multiplied; Moscow's streets and boulevards continued to swarm with teen-age prostitutes. The law against vice remained without practical application to lusty brigadiers—as long as they kept away from the womenfolk of the privileged.

Yagoda saw a remedy for the evil in healthy sport and organized Dinamo, the first sports club in Soviet Russia. He began with boxing. In a large courtyard fronting a GPU barrack a few blocks from AP headquarters, he ordered the erection of an experimental stadium complete with a roped-in platform, comfortable seats, and a buffet serving tea and *zakuski*. Vodka was taboo.

The opening was to be marked by two bouts—one between middleweight amateurs, the other between Grodapolov, an experienced heavyweight boxer who had trained in Finland, and a Russian who was still to be announced.

Yagoda telephoned me several times urging me to come and write something about his ambitious enterprise. While telling

me of the rapid progress in the building of the stadium, he complained of difficulties in his efforts to find an opponent able to meet the professional Grodapolov. Yagoda's men searched the country, but the best they could produce was a giant from Tver, "strong as an ox, but too dull to grasp the rudiments of boxing."

About a fortnight later I was at the stadium sipping tea with Yagoda and thus helping him set an example of sobriety to a youthful crowd excited in anticipation of an unprecedented spectacle.

The first bout was a fiasco. The qualified referee for some reason failed to show up. His replacement was a jittery, bald-headed Finn who let the amateurs slug it out to their hearts' content. To make things worse, someone forgot to ring the bell, and as a result the inexperienced men were at it for nearly two minutes, smashing away at ill-protected vital spots and hitting below the belt. A minute after the start, the eyes of both combatants were nearly closed, their faces pulps. When the bell finally did ring both fighters lay on the floor bleeding. A military doctor stopped the fight.

After a long intermission the heavyweights appeared at two opposite entrances to the stadium and came towards the ropes, marching to the tune of a blaring military band. In the dazzling radiance of sunset the "Oak from Tver" took on the appearance of a herculean figure lifted from the pages of Greek mythology. He was a smiling, redheaded, red-bearded giant with a tremendous span of shoulders, a barrel chest, and powerful biceps. But with all his imposing dimensions, his handsome face and especially his azure-blue eyes were those of a grown-up, good-natured child. Looking at him as he stood there happily grinning, one had the impression of a kindhearted soul who would never for anything hurt a fly. Grodapolov, a six-footer, seemed puny as the two men shook hands and went to their separate corners.

The twelve-round bout no sooner got under way than it became clear there would be no fight. The well-trained Groda-

polov did all the hitting, and the "Oak from Tver" did nothing but receive the blows. Yet somehow he managed to keep his face and vitals protected. With all his skill, Grodapolov could not penetrate the shield of the giant's huge, gloved fists, which from beginning to end of each round did nothing but screen his face and stomach. Towards the end of the sixth round Grodapolov gave the impression of a man completely tired out and beaten by his own efforts. At that stage the "Oak" might have disposed of his adversary with a single punch. But all he did was stand there grinning. At the beginning of the seventh round Grodapolov, obviously sore and exasperated, rushed his opponent with his right fist high in the air. Before anyone could realize what he was about, he hit the "Oak," as though with a sledge hammer, a vertical blow on top of his head. The redhead swayed, his knees buckled, and he dropped to the boards in a sitting posture still grinning. There were yells of protest as a GPU officer jumped to the platform and pronounced the "Oak" victor by a foul. The audience cheered, but Yagoda was disgusted. He begged me not to write a word about his enterprise. It was Moscow's first and last public exhibition of boxing.

Events moved swiftly in 1929. In May the Soviet press announced the launching of the Five-Year Plan, which had actually been under way for over a year. Barely five months following the announcement Stalin hastened to inform the world that he had scored a "victory on all fronts." In a speech full of braggadocio and bombast, the dictator claimed to have drawn millions of peasants into "voluntary" collectives and to have laid the foundation for a vast Soviet industry.

Carried away by the enthusiasm of his hand-picked admirers, Stalin brought them to their feet with the shout: "We are going full speed ahead, and once we have set the U.S.S.R. on an automobile and the peasant on a tractor, let the capitalists try to catch up to us!"

The Georgian's boast of a great victory rang like one of the burlesque funeral hymns at the procession of the godless,

who again, as under military communism, were marching all over Russia. That oration was a weird performance, staged against a background of boundless misery. Early that autumn, freight trains loaded with exiled peasants had been a common sight. I saw them at railway stations in Moscow and Leningrad. The exiles were mostly middle-aged men and women, and small children. The old and the youthful were left behind, the former to die, the latter to slave in the hastily organized communes or to serve in the brigades.

On a tour of the Ukraine late that fall I went through deserted villages and depopulated towns. Entire communities were being uprooted. Everywhere peasants were being summarily dealt with for slaughtering their own cattle, for hiding seeds, and for the faintest resistance to GPU mandates. All over the countryside leather-coated and heavily armed brigadiers were at work carrying out strict orders from the Apparatus to get through with their collectivization task before the coming celebration of Stalin's fiftieth birthday.

For two weeks I traveled by automobile from Kiev through the provinces of Volin and Podol. The picture darkened rapidly as I penetrated deeper into the country. Daily the scene became more gruesome. I rode through devastated communities and unplowed fields, over roads barren of traffic. Along with their cows, pigs, and poultry, the peasants were slaughtering their horses, the backbone of rural haul and tillage. Widespread acts of desperation bore every earmark of organized resistance, yet there was no evidence of a concerted movement. From my talks with many people, including the harassed and overburdened provincial Communists, I gathered that in most cases the peasants had acted on sheer impulse. They rebelled against the virtual, though unofficial, restoration of military communism, against the sudden ban on free markets, but above all against the sadism of the brigadiers who were no longer content with killing or deporting the rich kulaks. The victims of the new onslaught were mostly ordinary peasants, who at the point of the bayonet were forced to part with their homes, their cattle,

and their grain for the benefit, as they felt, of the ruling gang in Moscow and the lazy parasites in the villages.

A common objection to joining the collectives was the prospect of surrendering all one owned in return for vague promises of tractors, which were still largely in the stage of planning. There was, in addition, the passionate love of country folk for the animals they bred. At many places I saw peasants in tears as they stood around barbed-wire enclosures gazing at their confiscated horses.

In carrying out their drastic orders, the brigadiers would swoop down on a village, herd the cattle on one side of a street, the peasants on the other, and face the latter with an ultimatum. Those who declined to join the commune, or pleaded for time to think it over, were placed under arrest. Peasants listed as owners of grain or cattle, who failed to produce either, were sent to the nearest tribunal for trial on charges of counter-revolution. A show of the faintest resistance was invariably punished with execution on the spot. In many villages the brigadiers began their work with a shooting, just by way of example.

At scores of railway stations I came across prison trains bound for Siberia, and at every stop on the way, there were eyewitness accounts of mass arrests and mass murders.

In Yekaterinoslav, where I stopped on the way back, my old friends drew a picture of current events that made the horrors of civil war pale by comparison. They told of collective suicides. Entire families and whole groups of peasants had preferred a quick end to torment in Siberian concentration camps. In the frontier zones countless peasants were being slaughtered in their attempts to flee across the borders to neighboring countries. Meanwhile, all over the Ukraine the godless were tearing down churches, persecuting priests, and staging antireligious processions, depriving the stricken of spiritual solace at a time when they had little else left to live for. I returned to Moscow in time to witness the demolition of many of the capital's oldest

churches. Here, too, the work of destruction was being accompanied by bellowing antireligious processions.

Towards the end of the year the stores in Moscow were almost devoid of merchandise, and the bread lines lengthened to the point where people had to stand all night to get a loaf of bread. Again, as in the days preceding Lenin's death, the capital was in the grip of cold, hunger, and fright. But in one respect the situation differed radically from that of 1924: equality of poverty, an equal share in the common burden, was now a thing of the past. In the midst of the ragged and starving masses strode a privileged few who, by reason either of political position or of technical skill, were provided with ample food, clothing, and excellent shelter. It was the beginning of a new era, when Stalin's henchmen everywhere emerged from the obscurity of the party cells to become directors of industry, commerce, and government, forming cliques in the image of the central Apparatus. From now on they were to bestride Russia as its untitled lords and masters, limited in their power and arrogance only by the whims of a dictator whom they had brought into being. Before long they would form a new class of parasites, exploiting the workers on farm and factory and consuming a share of surplus value undreamt of in any capitalist country. From his place of exile Rakovsky, former Soviet Ambassador to France, wrote at the time: "We are witnessing the formation of a class of directors with internal subdivisions and a fictitious electoral system. The element uniting this class is a form of private property, that is, the state power. The directors take their stand on the Marxist phrase: 'The bureaucracy possesses the State as their private property.'"

Stalin deliberately aimed at the creation of a devoted oligarchy on whom he could rely in this and in any future crisis. The resulting sharp cleavage between the haves and the have-nots was visible in every factory, office building, institution, home, and village street. It was visible even in death. An actor in Meyerhold's Theater, whose child died at the time, told me

that he was having great difficulties in arranging the funeral. Under a regime of strict state control it was very hard for him (an underprivileged person) to secure such items as a coffin, a shroud, and a place in the cemetery at some distance from the fence where young vandals were tearing down monuments and besmirching graves. All over the country the privileged, including skilled shop workers, ate in special dining rooms plentifully supplied with meat, poultry, milk, and butter, while ordinary toilers had to be content with abominably baked black bread, watery soup, and an occasional bit of meat or fish. The primary purpose of lunches in the factories and plants was to supplement the steadily shrinking rations allotted to homes. The growing shortage and inequality in distribution gave rise to widespread grumbling and frequent outbursts among proletarian diners. The situation was aggravated by the hoarding of silver coin which, with the devaluation of paper money, became the principal medium of exchange on the black markets. For all of those evils the Apparat had as usual but one remedy—terror.

One day the Soviet press announced the summary execution of fifteen men found guilty of hoarding silver coin. At about the same time the GPU publicized the execution of five employees of a workers' feeding center. According to the bulletin, "counterrevolutionaries," disguised as a supply man, a chef, and three kitchen hands, conspired to foment unrest among workmen by serving them unpalatable food. Execution notices of this kind were too transparent to deceive even the dullest. It was perfectly clear that the executed were mere scapegoats, a clumsy excuse for the abominable food that was being dished out to the mass of unprivileged workers.

On December 21 the budding aristocracy celebrated their master's fiftieth birthday. From early morning till late at night the capital was aroar with demonstrations of abject praise for a widely hated man. The press was full of accounts of the wonders wrought by Stalin before and after the Revolution.

According to these eulogies he was a military genius, a great Marxian scholar, the architect and builder of Soviet victory on all fronts, the defender of the exploited and downtrodden the world over, the Man of Steel destined to lead the international proletariat to a victorious world revolution.

For months following the celebrations the Soviet press was full of adoring messages. There was a world-wide chorus of sycophancy in the foreign communist papers. And it was even joined by some foreign capitalists to whom Stalin was handing out fat import orders for which Russia was to pay with its life's blood.

An American business delegation came over that summer. Like big businessmen from other countries, they were lavishly entertained at sumptuous banquets. They were wine and dined, and they made flowery speeches to their gangster hosts, unaware of or indifferent to the curses of famished Russians loitering outside the brightly lighted, luxurious banquet halls.

The chorus of praise for Stalin's deeds kept up until nearly the end of winter. The Soviet press and Moscow's agents and sympathizers abroad denied all reports of the unspeakable, almost daily, pogroms on peasants. Then one day Stalin himself felt compelled to admit the authenticity of those reports and call a halt to the steady massacre. He was moved to it when Rykov, still Premier on sufferance, begged to be relieved of his duties. The Premier was backed up by War Commissar Voroshilov, whose dwindling supplies for the army had brought on a new crisis. Faced with the menace of a hungry army, Stalin once again beat a hasty retreat. On March 2, 1930, he published an article denouncing his "overzealous" brigadiers, warning them that they would be held accountable for their "exceptionally brutal, criminal conduct." In the same article Stalin ordered his henchmen to stop forthwith all "arbitrary arrests and closing of markets and churches." This was a belated admission that all the propaganda about "voluntary" collectivization had been phony. The effect of Stalin's action was amazing. In the first two weeks of February the number of forcibly collectivized

households dropped from 14,264,000 to 5,778,000. Over eight million peasant families, thus freed from bondage, went back to their homes and fields. Those who remained collectivized were by special decree accorded the right to retain their huts, their individual gardens, a cow, and poultry. Thus came to an end the first phase of this brutal process of collectivization. At any moment during that whole period Stalin could have stopped the horror by merely giving Yagoda a word of command. He preferred to wait until the whole Russian economy was on the verge of collapse and then, as always, to throw the whole blame on his underlings.

Stalin's somersault created a far greater sensation abroad than inside Russia, where people had long since become familiar with his twists and turns. This last one, however, gave rise to widespread rumors that he had gone insane. The reports of mental derangement persisted until Stalin felt compelled to talk to a foreign correspondent. His choice fell on Eugene Lyons, who had written him requesting an interview. On November 23 he called Lyons in for the purpose of squelching the insanity yarns.

In diplomatic circles Stalin's turnabout was regarded as evidence that he had realized the gravity of his error and would not persist in his disastrous course. Quite a different mood prevailed at the Kremlin. I found the Right-wing leaders unconsoled by the sudden change. "A temporary maneuver," Rykov called it, "a hasty retreat to a point from which he will start all over again, unless checked by powers beyond his control."

Towards the end of the year Stalin confirmed this prediction. He suddenly decreed the collectivization of nearly all of Russia's wheat-growing land. Simultaneously he launched a new indirect attack against the Rights by staging another trial of industrial engineers. On December 18, *Izvestia* front-paged an indictment against the well-known engineer Ramzin, charging him and a group of his co-workers with a counterrevolutionary plot to undermine the Soviet industry.

The unnamed targets in this, as in the Shakhata burlesque,

were the Right-wing leaders who had consistently refused to co-operate in collectivization and were intimately connected with the Ramzin group as sponsors of their moderate industrial program. Rykov's last act as Premier was a plea on behalf of these victims. When his plea failed he offered his resignation. It was accepted on December 19, 1930. A day later *Izvestia* announced the appointment of Molotov as Soviet Premier. On that day, too, the son of a Georgian shoemaker became the uncrowned Tsar of Russia.

Chapter 23

The Russian Ballet

THE RUSSIAN BALLET SURVIVED the Revolution in all its splendor and quaint charm. To many Russians the ballet was much more than a rare achievement in art; it was a link with the past, a vivid reminder of old Russia, an oasis of adored folklore in a desert of pain. To the lonely and the nostalgic who could never make peace with the Revolution the Ballet Theater was like a temple, where they could weep in the dark and pray for a miraculous return of their lost world.

Three evenings each week the magnificent troupe danced to the accompaniment of the Grand Philharmonic Orchestra. Later in the night the Cheka might knock at the door, but now inside the theater one could forget, if only for a while.

One of Lenin's first acts in October 1917 was to throw a protective shield around Russia's museums, churches, and institutions of science and art. With the help of idealists like Yenukidze, Lunacharsky, and others, he was able to check some of the party madmen bent on wrecking Russia's cultural heritage. In pursuance of his policy the Rights were always on the alert against extremists, who denounced everything reminiscent of the past and even wanted to convert the Russian theater into an instrument of propaganda.

With Stalin's advent to supreme power the extremists managed to make all Russian theaters toe the line. Even Stanislavsky's world-famous Moscow Art Theater, home of the classics, did not escape. His celebrated actors were compelled to clown it like the rest in *agitky* (propaganda pieces). In those days it was widely predicted that the ballet would soon come to an end. These predictions became widespread when Stalinists planted in the party cell of the Grand Theater succeeded in staging an abortive monstrosity in which prima ballerinas were made to dance "proletarian solos" with brooms in hand, rags on their bodies, and torn shoes on their feet. The revolting spectacle aroused the top leaders to hot anger. For different reasons they all combined to save the magnificent troupe from destruction. The Rights were moved by their love for Russian folklore and for the unexcelled art of the Grand Ensemble. The Apparatus boys, known among artists as "commissarial grand dukes," wanted to protect their favorite dancers. The public, as usual, remained on the sidelines, too frightened to show resentment but glad at heart that for once the men in the Kremlin were unanimous on a popular issue.

Thus it came about that on the very night when the classic ballet seemed to have come to an end, it gained greater prestige than ever before. At the sight of their beloved dancers burlesquing to the nerve-racking tunes of a futuristic hodgepodge, the rulers in the government loge decided it was high time to call a halt to the maniacs in their own ranks.

Luckily for the ballet, Stalin happened to be one of its outstanding admirers. Unlike some of his leading henchmen, he truly admired the art and was never known to take advantage of his position to force his attentions on beautiful artists. Dancers called him "balletomane."* He seldom missed a ballet. If pressed for time he would come to the theater for only an act or a scene. After long and tiring sessions of the Politburo he would urge its members to go with him to the ballet and relax.

Oddly enough, in his love for the oldest classics Stalin was

* The word means a person who is "ballet-crazy."

not unlike the many forlorn souls in Moscow who could never make peace with the Revolution.

I first saw the ballet in 1924 when Bradford Merrill cabled me to see the dancers and write a background story. With Merrill's cable I came to Tikhomirov, chief ballet master of the Grand Theater. He offered to help me with material, suggesting that I begin by seeing the *Hunchback Horse* (*Konyek Gorbunok*), the most popular of the classics. This ballet is based on an old Slav legend dating back to the times when Tartar Khans ruled Russia. In the opening scene Ivanushka Durachok (Ivan the Little Fool) is out in the fields watching a couple of horses at pasture. With him are his father and two brothers. Night falls, and the older peasants leave the boy, warning him to be on the lookout for thieves. Little Ivan is drowsy. To keep awake he counts the stars in heaven but soon lapses into slumber. On awakening he sees that the horses are gone and cries out in despair. A little hunchback horse comes to his aid. It cracks a whip, and lo! two gold-braided stallions come racing towards Ivanushka. The hunchback horse then hands its whip to the lad, indicating that all he has to do to have any desire fulfilled is to crack it once or twice. When Ivan's brothers return to the field and hear his story they take him, together with the gold-braided horses, to the Khan. They find the Khan in his magnificent harem, bored to death. He is annoyed by his voluptuous mistress and weary of her mates. He buys the beautiful horses and decides to keep Ivanushka, too. When the Khan is depressed Ivanushka tries to amuse him. He cracks his little whip and four beauties painted on the wall spring to life, dance some exquisite solos, and return to their places, leaving the Tartar more melancholy than ever. In the following act the Khan commands Ivanushka to find him the most beautiful woman in the world. The boy cracks and cracks. Out of the air comes one beauty after another. But the pot-bellied old ruler is hard to please. He yearns for a girl of unearthly beauty. Half a dozen cracks in rapid succession bring out the beautiful Princess of the Sea. She comes in a flash of

dazzling radiance. The Tartar is swept off his feet. He falls madly in love with the princess, but she escapes to her watery kingdom. The Khan orders Ivanushka to find her. The boy discovers the princess in her palace beneath the waves. She falls in love with him and follows him back to the harem. Her return is celebrated with a grand ball in which all of Russia's nationalities dance their national dances. In the final scene the old Khan begs Ivanushka to make him young and handsome. Ivanushka tells the Khan to jump into a seething cauldron. He does so; there is a revolution in the palace; and Ivanushka and the princess are crowned Tsar and Tsarina of Russia.

The stars of the evening were Lyuba Bank, who played the princess, and Victor Smoltsov in the role of Ivanushka. Both, according to Tikhomirov, ranked with great artists like Pavlova and Nijinsky. Lyuba Bank had the advantage of youth and rare beauty. The ballet master was eloquent about the supremacy of her art. Her lofty vaults, he explained, were devoid of any visible effort. She seemed to float in the air and toe the boards with birdlike ease. The highlight of the evening was a solo before the Khan, when the playing rose in a tremendous crescendo. At its first note Lyuba leapt for the shadows backstage, wheeled about, and, facing the audience with a happy smile, sailed forth spinning on the left toe while her beautifully arched right leg swung in rhythmic circles.

Before the dancer was halfway across stage the theater rang with applause. Spinning in a steady sweep forward, the prima made straight for the footlights. As she came within the glare of front stage, people up high cried: "Bravo!" "Bravo!" The gallery and the balconies cheered. The rest of the audience joined in the ovation. So did Stalin, Yenukidze, Karakhan, and the other occupants of the government box. Like the enthusiasts in the gallery they were applauding and hurraing the magnificent dancer.

During the intermission Tikhomirov suggested a visit backstage. Out in the corridor he pointed to a group of men dressed in old, glossy, but well-cut, frock coats and striped trousers.

"These are all we have left of our former balletomanes," said the master. "They never miss a performance, but they can no longer give our girls diamonds and palatial homes."

Behind the curtain I made the acquaintance of the stars of the evening. They were husband and wife, under different stage names. The four of us went upstairs to see Chudinov, who played the Khan. On our way up Smoltsov told me one of the many yarns about Chudinov's counterrevolutionary pranks. The famous artist never danced a step on the stage or in life, but he had no equal in the art of pantomime. A melancholy man who rarely smiled, Chudinov could set an audience laughing with a mere gesture. His acting never conformed to any set pattern. He always managed to introduce something original, something that would occur to him on the spur of the moment. Some of those pranks would bring on veritable fits of laughter and prolonged applause. Before the Revolution, Chudinov had been a favorite of the nobility. He remained a devoted monarchist, loyal to the Tsar's memory. One way to show his devotion to the executed monarch was to play the old Russian anthem. This he did on a gramophone which he always kept in his dressing room. During intermissions, strains of "God Save the Tsar" could be heard all over the stage. To one of Yagoda's warnings the artist replied: "You can send me to Siberia, but if you want me here I shall play whatever I please."

Chudinov welcomed us to his room. "I am happy to see an American," he said, "but I would be happier still to be in your country."

"Now, now," said Smoltsov, laughing, "none of your counterrevolutionary talk."

"If that is counterrevolution," snapped the man, "then we are all counterrevolutionists. Everyone of us is anxious to get away."

Those were the days when the Rights ruled in the Kremlin and people could be heard to speak their minds without fear.

Back in the loge Tikhomirov pointed to Yuri Fyer, conductor of the symphony. "This man," he said, "is in music what

Chudinov is in pantomime. He knows the peculiarities of each dancer and watches a soloist for the faintest sign of fatigue, slowing down the orchestra when necessary or accelerating when the artist is in good mettle. It is a rare gift."

A day later Tikhomirov invited me to see the ballet school. There, in one of the practice rooms, I found Lyuba Bank and Smoltsov with towels around their necks. Together with a group of stars, starlets, and senior students they were going through their daily exercise.

"We never graduate," said Smoltsov. "The secret of our art is very hard work and the strictest self-discipline." He pointed to his dancing partner. "Take Lyuba," he said, "no smoking, the simplest food, no vodka, and no childbirth, although both of us are fond of children. If one of our girls here wants children she may remain in the chorus, but she must give up all thought of ever dancing solo."

"And don't you smoke or drink?" I asked the dancer.

"I do," replied Smoltsov. "That is why I play Ivanushka these days and do very little dancing. Unless I can take myself in hand I shall soon have to play characters or take up teaching."

We went from class to class and through the spacious practice rooms. Everywhere there were mixed groups of artists and advanced students engaged in practice. Some of them were hard at work, others panting for breath after arduous exercise. The smell of sweat was in the air.

"Physical training," explained Tikhomirov, "is only part of our curriculum." He led the way through classes where future dancers were being taught literature, history, mathematics, and all the other subjects of a regular high-school course.

The average age of admission was eight. The pupils stayed in school for ten years, studying in the daytime and dancing with the regular troupe at night. As before the Revolution, the artistic standards of the Russian Ballet remained the highest in the world. "All depends upon this school," explained Tikhomirov. "Abolish it and in a decade we should have no ballet."

A special committee of teachers and older artists was in

charge of admissions. To enter the school a child had to be a rare specimen of beauty and good health. On the average they would admit one out of a hundred applicants.

Before the Revolution, Tikhomirov pointed out, many of the ballet students came from orphan asylums, since few families cared to have their children subjected to a rigid ten-year discipline. But the Revolution brought a change. Ever since 1917 parents have been anxious to place their offspring in a school where, in addition to being provided with essentials, they could look forward to a career of relative security from Soviet rigors.

No student of the ballet school knew until his or her fifteenth birthday whether he would ever qualify for the Grand Theater. A good deal depended not only on talent and long training but on the gradual formation of the body.

The students were constantly reminded that a Pavlova or Nijinsky is born but once in decades. To attain perfection one has to be not only a great dancer, actor, and athlete but have in addition a spark of genius. There were talented soloists who could never dream of becoming primas because they lacked the exceptional ankle and toe strength required for leading the ensemble in a four-act drama.

It was a rare privilege for a girl or boy to enter the ballet school. It meant much to them and their families after graduation. For the dancers were looked up to in Soviet society. They were at all times provided with decent food, clothing, and shelter. They had access to, and were in fact eagerly welcomed in, the Kremlin. Men of high rank were envied by comrades when seen in public with ballerinas. Unable to give them palaces like the grand dukes, the mighty commissars were in a position to help their favorites in many other ways. And the Chekists had their hidden powers to make life easy for dancers with a flair for espionage.

About a week after my visit to the ballet school, Jimmy Mills and I had dinner with Tikhomirov. Through him we made the acquaintance of other artists. Before long we were familiar with

the Grand Theater stage life, which, oddly enough, tied in neatly with the goings-on at the Kremlin. With all my contacts there, it would take me hours to get a pass and have it checked and rechecked on the way to the home or office of a close friend. Yet some of the ballerinas could go through those gates at all hours of the day and night. And they always had some business at the Kremlin. If a prima ballerina felt she was not getting her proper share of title roles, or if she had any grievance against the director of the theater, she was sure to visit the Kremlin and get things straightened out. If a soloist wanted to become a prima, or if a *korifeyka* (rank-and-file dancer) had ambition to dance solo, she would run to her friends at the Kremlin, above all to Yenukidze.

On the whole the ensemble was divided into two camps—the highly gifted, who could always rely on Yenukidze, and the average dancers, some of them girls of exceptional beauty who strove for stardom by capitalizing on their intimacy with men in power. On the stage the ballet ensemble was a picture of harmony, smiles, and good will. But behind the scenes they were constantly intriguing against one another, and the Kremlin remained their favorite “salon.” In due time our friends from the ballet were letting us in on Kremlin gossip which, though taboo with the censor, gave us many an illuminating glimpse of life behind the red walls.

Strangely enough, while Stalin's henchmen figured prominently in some of those “court” scandals, he, himself, was rarely mentioned. Though loving the ballet, he kept aloof from the ballerinas. Many artists were of the opinion that the Georgian's restrained personal life was due to his all-consuming passion for power, a passion that made him immune to human frailties. Be that as it may, the fact remains that in all those years of relative freedom under the Moderates, I heard of but one trifling incident involving Stalin. One night in 1924 he invited Lyuba Bank to his home. The invitation was conveyed by the ill-fated go-between Baron von Steiger. Lyuba declined point-blank. She feared trouble in consequence, but nothing happened. It

was the only incident of the kind. After that, Stalin never figured in any of the numerous scandals. But his name would pop up in political gossip, which the dancers loved no less than stage talk. A dancer once told us of being eyewitness to a clash between Stalin and Ryazanov that had been the talk of Moscow for years. In the presence of a number of people Ryazanov, head of the Marx and Engels Institute, said to Stalin: "You recite passages from Marx like a dull schoolboy without knowing what they mean." Whereupon Stalin slapped the old man and was slapped in turn by one of Ryazanov's friends.

Nearly all the ballet gossip about the Secretary had a purely political slant and was for that reason regarded as definite proof of Stalin's scrupulous behavior with women. "Even the dancers," I heard people say, "know nothing sexy about the man." But there were many Russians who would have preferred to see the Georgian rollick in a harem rather than in the Apparatus.

"Tovarishch" Baron (Steiger) remained the center of the ballet intrigue. As under the Tsar, his intimacy with the dancers was exploited by the mighty in the government and in the party. During the day Steiger was attached to the Art Department, where he had neither office nor desk. In the evenings he was busy arranging concerts for the Foreign Office or in the embassies. But his real work began late at night when he acted as procurer of beauty for his elite clientele who, in a city of prevailing want, led a life of unbridled luxury and vice, competing for the caresses of the less talented dancers who were willing to go to any lengths for a solo on the grand stage.

Years before his execution the baron lived in constant dread of it. Dressed in his prerevolutionary frock coat and striped trousers, always smiling and well-mannered, Steiger was perhaps the unhappiest man in the capital. He was always treading on thin ice and was painfully conscious that it might give way at any moment. The former aristocrat could never forget that his social and political status was that of an outlaw, completely at the mercy of a client in anger. His ready smile was as much

part of his make-up as were his manicured nails, his snow-white gloves, or the flower in his lapel. Underneath it all was the ever haunting dread of displeasing some habitual killer.

Late one night I found Steiger in tears at Chicherin's secretariat. He came there to plead with the Foreign Commissar that he telephone an Apparatchik who had threatened him with summary proceedings. Chicherin refused to get mixed up in scandal. In his despair Steiger pleaded with Galperin, chief of the secretariat, to let him remain for the night at the Foreign Office so that he might see Karakhan in the morning. He was afraid to go home. As the secretary hesitated, Steiger begged me to intervene.

"Imagine my position," he said. "All I can do is introduce people. Beyond that I am helpless. But if a girl resists, I am always the one to blame."

I finally prevailed upon Galperin to let the man stay in the building until he could see Karakhan who had helped him out of similar difficulties before.

Some of Steiger's ballet friends were rollicking in Kremlin night life. Others feared and abhorred it. Lyuba Bank was one of a group who never accepted an invitation. Kira Vasilyeva, a gifted dancer and the daughter of a well-known Moscow physician, justified her visits to the Kremlin by frequently telling of her experience with the Chekist Byelenky. One night, at the height of an antireligious campaign, Kira noticed on Byelenky's desk a list of priests who were to be tried by the GPU trio on the following morning. Kira pleaded with the Chekist and succeeded in securing his promise that none of the prisoners would be shot. Byelenky kept his word. Other dancers had similar stories, but Kira's was reputed to be genuine.

In their dressing rooms the dancers were always bickering, seeming to be unable to agree on anything. But on one subject they were unanimous. They all wanted to tour the world, to dance in London, Paris, and, above all, in New York. "Take us to America" became a regular refrain.

On his visit to Moscow in 1925, Morris Gest told me that at the request of Otto H. Kahn, banker and at the time president of the Metropolitan Opera Board, he had tried to bring the Russian Ballet to New York, but was told that the Soviet Government would never entrust the ballet or even a group of dancers to a private impresario. Gest asked me to talk to Yenukidze. I was told that the Soviet Government would let the entire Moscow Ballet tour America on a non-profit basis, but only under the sponsorship of a committee of eminent Americans. Yenukidze confided to me that many in power were opposed to the tour on the ground that most of the dancers would never return. The only way to placate them was to turn it into a sort of good-will mission, with the object of hastening American recognition of Soviet Russia.

I sent the message, and Kahn replied promptly that he would under no circumstances "be mixed up in any Soviet enterprise with a political angle."

I repeated these words to Yenukidze and thought no more of it until 1927, when Theodore Dreiser came to Russia. Dreiser's enthusiasm for the ballet was boundless. During his stay in Moscow he never missed a performance. Since he was anxious to meet the dancers, my friends at the theater arranged a party for him at the Gypsy Tavern. After the ballet, we sat until dawn sipping Caucasian wine and listening to old gypsy airs. That morning, on the way to his hotel, Dreiser offered to talk to Otto H. Kahn and others about bringing the Moscow Ballet to America.

"Kahn is the man, all right," he said, "and he needn't worry about that eminent committee. I'll attend to that. But first I must talk it over with some people here. They all want American recognition. Well, let them send us the ballet and we'll give them a kind of propaganda that cannot fail." He left Moscow a few days later.

Nearly a year went by without a word from Dreiser. Then, one day in the autumn of 1928, he cabled me that the foundation for a non-profit American tour of the Ballet had been laid.

Acting on Yenukidze's suggestion, he had organized a committee of distinguished sponsors highlighted by Otto H. Kahn; John W. Davis, former candidate for president; Harlan Stone, Justice of the United States Supreme Court; Frank L. Polk, former Secretary of State; and Norman Davis, Ivy Lée, Leopold Stokowski, Condé Nast, Jules Bache, and Mrs. Christian Holmes. It appeared that, after negotiating in vain with Amtorg for months, the committee wanted me to carry on negotiations in Moscow. I would act as counsel for the group with power to close the deal subject to the committee's approval. Dreiser concluded by stating that Otto Kahn was willing to pay me a handsome fee. I replied by cable, advising Dreiser that I would serve without compensation on two conditions: the consent of the AP to be secured by the committee and receipt of Kahn's personal authorization to act for him. Compliance with these conditions, I believed, was indispensable for my protection with the AP and for effective negotiations with the Soviets. The committee's inability to come to an understanding with Amtorg was clear indication of stubborn resistance somewhere. There was no doubt in my mind that I was in for a fight, and I wanted advance assurance of solid backing.

Within a week both Kahn and Dreiser cabled that they had secured the AP's consent and that I was appointed legal representative of the committee with authority to commence negotiations at once. With these cables in hand I decided to deal directly with the administration of the Grand Theater, hoping thereby to placate their party cell. Experience had taught me not to try to go over the heads of the Apparatchiks.

My initial steps brought a quick response. Everybody was enthusiastic. The dancers were jubilant. There was no question in their minds that they were going. All that remained, they felt, was to determine the date of departure and the length of the tour. The favorable reaction of the theater administration foreshadowed quick consummation of the deal. In less than a week I was in possession of an official memorandum embracing all the terms of a one-year contract with an option for a second year.

This document was speedily approved by the Commissariat of Education. In order to save time the officials suggested that I cable instead of mailing the contents of the memorandum. While countersigning the paper, both Lunacharsky, the Commissar of Education, and Svidersky, then head of the Art Department, assured me that the government was ready to accept this outline if made in the form of an offer. New York acted quickly. Within a week I was authorized to submit an offer based substantially on the Soviet memorandum. Thus, in a few days I had managed to secure an almost complete meeting of minds. All that remained was to iron out some minor technical details.

The following day the Soviet answer came, an answer so embarrassing to the Commissar of Education and to his aide that both of them failed to show up at our next appointment. In their absence poor old ex-Prince Obolyensky handed me a note demanding a million-dollar guarantee that the whole troupe would return to Moscow intact. It specified that the million dollars in bonds or cash would be forfeited if a single artist remained abroad for any reason save death. This was obviously a condition to which my clients would not agree. Realizing this, Obolyensky said: "You have our sympathy. We meant well. But ours, as you may know, is not the last word!"

Obolyensky could go no further than to indicate vaguely the reason for the unexpected development. For nearly a year now, no commissariat could decide a matter of major importance without the approval of its party cell. Under a rigid rule laid down by the Apparatus, all business in Soviet institutions moved "along party lines." In everyday practice this meant that while the officials upstairs did the talking, the cell down below had the right and duty to make recommendations for final decision by the Apparatus. With Stalin's advent to absolutism, the bottleneck of the Apparatus became hopelessly clogged.

In these circumstances I could think of no better man to approach than Yenukidze, whom I had deliberately avoided ever

since the receipt of Dreiser's cable for fear of antagonizing the lower officials. Now there was no longer need of this precaution. Yenukidze knew more about the negotiations than any of the negotiators, including myself. And he was deeply interested, for the ballet was his great delight and constant worry. He had known I would come to him, for on the day that Lunacharsky approved the memorandum, three powerful Stalinists—Smirnov, Trillisser, and Ordzhonokidze—had told him they would insist on ample guarantees to make sure that the ballet returned to Moscow. The real aim of these men and their colleagues, Yenukidze believed, was to kill the tour so they could keep their mistresses in Russia.

Fearing that my explanation to the committee would discourage any further discussion, Yenukidze advised me to cable New York that there was a division of opinion in the upper spheres. He authorized me to use his name as one of a group of Soviet sponsors desiring to co-operate with the Americans.

He also had a plan ready. He would try persuasion, and, that failing, he would have the mistresses put pressure on their mighty men. As a last resort he would take the matter up with Stalin. There was no telling what Josif Vissarionovich might do in a case like this. For the time being, he depended too much on his leading henchmen to risk any break with the Apparatus. Besides, he himself might fear losing the ballet, a possibility which the Apparatchiks would not fail to exploit. Accordingly, I sent a veiled explanation, pleading for time.

It took Yenukidze nearly six months to have the demand for a million-dollar guarantee set aside. It took him, Serebriakov, and other friends over a year to iron out all the technical details.

By July 1929 our contract was signed and sealed. All that remained was to comply with a provision requiring its ratification by the Council of People's Commissars. Preparations for the tour were under way. From New York came word that the committee had engaged a symphonic orchestra. Some of the scenery and most of the costumes were to be sent from Mos-

cow, but artists in New York would do the rest. Pamphlets announcing the tour, with a full list of the sponsors, were already in circulation.

Meanwhile, the Apparatchiks reached Morris Gest, who had been left out of the picture for reasons which neither Kahn nor Dreiser ever communicated to me. Acting through an American concessionaire, Gest had offered to turn the ballet tour into a source of badly needed foreign currency. Yenukidze and Serebriakov discussed the matter with Stalin, who ordered the Commissar of Education to carry out their obligations to the Reswick committee. Thus blocked in Moscow, the Stalinists induced Morris Gest to complain against me to the Associated Press at a time when Kent Cooper, the general manager, was away. His assistant, Jackson Elliot, cabled me a peremptory order to withdraw from the negotiations. To this order, coming long after assurances by Kahn and Dreiser that the AP had approved of my action, I replied by sending my resignation. I was asked to stay on until a substitute arrived. Although resentful, I stuck to my post.

New delays, coming after the crash on Wall Street, discouraged some of the sponsors. Dreiser himself withdrew about the end of November, and early in 1930, I returned to New York. By that time the Council of People's Commissars had ratified the ballet contract, and Amtorg in New York was under instructions to sign up with the committee—but there was no longer any committee. They had all tired of Moscow's machinations and followed Dreiser's lead in withdrawing. Kahn remained the only interested party, and he, as in the past, was determined to have no hand in organizing a committee of sponsors.

The powerful Apparatchiks had their way in the end.

Chapter 24

An Offer of Twenty-Five Million

IN JULY, THE NEW YORK *WORLD* wanted me to go back into Russia on a special assignment. There was a similar offer from the King Features Syndicate. My answer to both was that honest reporting in the U.S.S.R., always difficult, had become practically impossible with Stalin's rise to power. For over a year now, news work in Russia had deteriorated steadily, reaching a point where foreign correspondents had to toe the line like the humblest of their Soviet brethren. The time was gone when a foreign reporter in Moscow could bargain with the Press Bureau, appeal to Chicherin, or squeeze in a carefully veiled lead.

I had a hard time making up my mind about those offers. During the previous eight years I had become attached to my native land, acquiring many dear friends, the mere thought of whom made me yearn to get back. Still, I decided to have no more truck with censorship, fond as I was of its chief victim—Podolsky—who perished in 1937 in the Great Purge.

Having given up Soviet journalism, there remained but two ways for me to return to Russia—either on business or on an assignment by some law firm dealing with the Soviets. Failing

in both, I decided to join a law office, rent an apartment in New York, and bring the family back from France. At this time Jules Bache, a member of the defunct Ballet Committee, came forward with a proposal that I return to Moscow on a highly important matter.

Bache, a prominent financier and art collector, had been informed that the Soviet Government was having considerable difficulty in meeting its short-term financial obligations abroad. The trouble arose in connection with the large-scale import of foreign machinery to implement the Five-Year Plan. To meet their notes maturing at six-month intervals, the Soviets were dumping their scanty food reserves, together with furs, lumber, and so forth, on European markets. Unable to sell enough, and urgently in need of American tractors, they were out to dispose of some of their art treasures, notably paintings from the world-famous Hermitage Museum in Leningrad. It was rumored that half a dozen masterpieces had already been sold to Andrew Mellon. Bache was eager to bid for an entire collection at an estimated value of from twenty to twenty-five million dollars. His dealer, it appeared, had already approached the Soviet officials in charge but could get no further than to be apprised that the government might be willing to deal directly with private collectors or museums. They disliked dealers whose large profits were likely to halve the Soviet revenue from the sale. Above all they feared a conspiracy by professionals to depreciate values.

Bache was willing to come to Moscow, but not before the ground had been paved for concrete talks. To make his proposition attractive, the financier offered to pay my expenses at the rate of \$300 a week, to guarantee me a five per cent brokerage on any purchase, and to interpose no objection to my having clients in other fields. This right he granted because I told him in all frankness that the very magnitude of his scheme was likely to militate against its consummation. Experience had taught me that while Soviet officials might do business in routine matters, they were in mortal fear of anything novel or big, no matter how beneficial to the state. With the consent of Bache, I

went to Russia via London, where my old client Norman Weisz arranged to follow me to Moscow. Later on, the French aviation firm of Gnôme et Rhône retained me as their Russian representative in negotiations with the Soviet Aviation Trust.

Thus, in August 1930, I was back in Moscow. I found the city in straits far worse than during the previous winter. One of my first and most striking impressions was the sharp contrast between the regular troops and those of the special GPU army. The day after my return I was amazed to see an unarmed battalion of infantry march through the streets in sullen silence. In the years past they had always sung. Now the "pride of the proletarian dictatorship" were silent, and they looked pale and gaunt. Their summer uniforms hung loose on emaciated bodies. With protruding cheekbones and eyes deep in their sockets, they trudged and wobbled. The men were plainly starved. As the battalion strung out down Tverskaya two military trucks manned by smartly uniformed, well-fed, and cheerful-looking GPU soldiers roared by. The contrast was too striking to escape the notice of people on the street, whose faces, like those of the foot soldiers, bore the unmistakable imprint of undernourishment. The scene was reminiscent of the postwar famine, with this difference: in 1921-22 the government had somehow managed to feed the army. Now there were two armies—one hungry and sad, the other well fed and gay.

Yenukidze enlightened me on the plight of the regular army and on the current crisis. Stalin, he explained, had started too late to halt the violent tempo of collectivization. Weeks before his decision to stop the shock brigades, the peasants had slaughtered the bulk of their livestock and poultry. With the aid of wheat imports, the government had barely managed to keep the country supplied with bread, but there was no meat, no poultry, no milk, no eggs or vegetables, except what had been set aside for the GPU divisions and for the privileged in the party, government, and industry. They, as before, were being supplied from special state farms.

Yenukidze was as frank as ever. On the surface, he confided,

everything was quiet. But there was a perilous undercurrent. The sight of regulars marching through the streets unarmed was not accidental. For some time now the Red Army barracks had been divested of arms. The new rule was both a precaution against military revolt and a safeguard against clashes between the famished regulars and the arrogant, heavily armed military Chekists.

The plight of the workers, he told me, was even worse than that of the regular army. Thus far the government had managed to keep up a bread ration for all. But there was always danger in overfeeding the privileged few while keeping the masses half starved.

Informed of my mission in Moscow, Yenukidze said: "Three years ago Comrade Rykov would have urged you to bring your client here at once. Of what good is a Hermitage packed full of masterpieces when food is literally being torn out of our people's mouths to be shipped abroad in payment for machines which the Soviet workers don't know how to operate and are too hungry to learn?"

Yenukidze tried to think of someone in the Kremlin vested with discretion to take up the Bache offer. But there was none save Stalin, and from Stalin, his childhood friend, he had been estranged for some time. Under the circumstances he suggested that I apply to Yilin—chief of the newly organized trust dealing with antiques.

After a ten-minutes talk with Yilin, I saw that his main concern was to evade the issue. The Bache proposition was too big, too vital. It scared him. There was fear in Yilin's eyes as I mentioned the figure, \$25,000,000. He wanted to make sure of my client's name and seemed relieved when I spelled it out for him.

"Bache," he said, smiling. "He must be the same Bache who approached us in Paris through his agent. That agent, it may interest you to know, tops the list of our business enemies. He has been sabotaging our every effort to contact museums and private collectors. He tells them we are out to sell clever copies and keep the originals. Now, you must realize that a collector

so closely connected with a rascal should be investigated."

"Why investigate?" I asked. "And why raise issues of sabotage when my client is ready to come here himself and deal with you directly?"

Here Yilin, like all Soviet traders in a dilemma, reminded me of Lenin's admonition to "deal with capitalists, but never trust them." He cut short our talk with the remark: "Before I refer your offer to my superiors, I must have a report on your client from our men in New York."

"And how long will that take?"

"We are in no hurry."

"Well, what about all this talk of lack of foreign credits and Russia's urgent need for American tractors?"

I expected an explosion, but the man smiled benignly.

"That," he said, "is up to the top men. Let them worry about big things. My business is small. All I need to do right now is make sure that we are not dealing with an enemy, but a genuine collector."

It was plain that Yilin's chief concern was to shirk responsibility. In a way I could understand and sympathize with him. His seemingly unreasonable fear was but the inevitable result of existence in a precarious world; he clung to inaction as the safest way to keep out of trouble. It took him weeks to investigate. Meanwhile, I succeeded in securing a quick, routine purchase of jewelry from the Commissariat of Finance. Things had turned out to be just as I had foreseen them in New York.

Warned by Yilin of the thoroughness and probable length of his investigation, I sailed down the Volga as far as Stalingrad to have a look at the big monument to Stalin in process of erection. On my last visit there with Premier Rykov the old town (Tsaritsin) had still retained some of its Slavic charm. I remembered its gold-domed churches and the peal of their bells that carried for miles on either side of the Volga. Now the place was a bedlam of backbreaking toil and hectic enthusiasm bordering on madness. I watched a gang of youngsters at work on a night shift. They were drunk with vodka and song. Bleary-

eyed and groggy, they were digging ditches, hauling timber, and laying brick to the tune of a "death to the enemy" refrain. Hearing them, one would think that they were digging in for a battle at dawn. But only the young were thus active. The middle-aged and old looked famished and despondent. Here, as in the capital, there was a sharp cleavage between the privileged few and the "proletarian herd."

On the whole, the most "planned" city on earth presented a panorama that was the very negation of planning. Everywhere there were immense piles of imported rusting machinery covered over with layers of dust and dried mud. These piles stretched in the direction of as yet nonexistent factories, for some of which even the foundations were not dug. A construction engineer pointed to a huge accumulation of equipment saying: "By the time they get the buildings ready most of these machines will be of no earthly use."

From Stalingrad I returned to Moscow via the Ukraine where I paid a flying visit to friends in Yekaterinoslav, Kiev, Kharkov, and the surrounding countryside, which abounded in hastily organized "giant" collective farms. Here, too, I found widespread confusion and appalling suffering among the old and middle-aged. There were innumerable tragedies in home and family. Spurred on by shock brigadiers, peasant boys and girls were denouncing their own parents for newly invented "counterrevolutionary crimes," such as theft of "collectivized" grain, regardless of the amount involved. There were cases of summary trial and execution of parents accused by their own children of gleaning some ears of collectivized corn or hiding a handful of communal wheat. There were cases of parricide. A monument was built in Kharkov to the memory of a thirteen-year-old "proletarian martyr" killed by villagers in retaliation for testifying against his father. The father had been tried and executed for slaughtering his own calf after the publication of a decree prohibiting such slaughter without a special permit.

Of all I saw and heard that autumn, the manner of feeding the collectivized peasants sank deepest in memory. On every

communized farm visited I would see two queues lining up in front of separate canteens. One was invariably long, the other short. The lunch for each peasant in the long line, about nine-tenths of the toilers, consisted of a small can of watery soup and two or three slices of black bread. Those in the short queue, foremen and *stakhanovtzi* (fast workers), were served fish, containers of good soup, pints of milk, and larger portions of bread. There was envy in the eyes of many—envy, pain, and hatred.

It was nearly nine months since Stalin had called a halt to his campaign of collectivization by firing squad. The vaunted socialization of rural Russia had now crystallized into a form of slavery that made Tsarist serfdom a paradise by comparison.

On my return to Moscow, friends at the railway station greeted me with: "No meat! None at all!" Even the little to be seen in the foreign-currency hotels was gone. At the Grand Hotel where I was stopping, meat was still on the menu, but the tiny portions served were of a grade that made one turn away in disgust. The exclusive dining rooms reserved for the elite were the only exception. They were supplied by special farms in the Moscow region. Part of these supplies were also allotted to foreign diplomats and correspondents.

Sasha, still one of the best-informed newsmen in Moscow, summed up the situation thus: "The Red Army has been on a meatless diet for months. Fish, the best substitute, is getting scarce because of the tremendous demand and the inadequate refrigeration facilities. The workers and the regular soldiers are hungry. The special GPU army has first call on the livestock and poultry raised on its own large estates. That guarantees the loyalty of Stalin's special army."

In contrast to previous crises, there were this time no alarms, no stories of mass arrests, no Black Marias with their screeching sirens. All of that seemed now in the remote past when people still had courage to break out in anger and get themselves exiled or shot. Like the peasants on the collective farms, the Muscovites seemed now too tired and despondent to resent indi-

vidually or engage in mass protests. It was surprising, therefore, to learn from the papers one morning that the government was aroused over the lack of meat and meant to do something about it. On reading the news it occurred to me that Stalin might at long last have undergone a change of heart. Perhaps he had decided to import meat and cut down on the purchase of foreign machinery. My Russian friends were pessimistic, but there were chronic optimists who could see a change in the making. Some went so far as to predict the outright scrapping of collectivization, a drastic halt in heavy industrialization, a stoppage of food export, and the immediate importation of livestock.

The hope gained momentum when the papers came out with news of factory meetings at which workers passed cell-sponsored resolutions demanding severe punishment of those "responsible for sabotage of the meat industry." Actually these demands to punish *saboteurs* of a barely surviving meat industry boded no good. For over a year now it had been well known the world over that Russia's peasantry as a whole had slaughtered its cattle in retaliation for forcible collectivization. The cell-sponsored protest meetings, therefore, could not mean a change of fundamental policy. What did they mean, then? Why this talk of punishing imagined *saboteurs*?

Stalin's devastating answer came on a balmy day in autumn. Forty-eight innocent lives were snuffed out in the GPU courtyard for the sole purpose of providing the famished soldiers and workers with an "explanation" of why they had no meat.

On a tip from Sasha, I came upon the scene in time to witness one of the blackest crimes in Stalin's long record of sadism.

In the beginning Sasha's meat story sounded so fantastic that I had an impulse to touch his forehead to make sure he was not in a fever. In all these years the Cheka had taken care to execute people in the dead of night. The killing had been done in the vast underground passages on Lubianka, the only indication that the executioners were at work being a whirr of truck motors in the courtyard. Now, Sasha informed me, they were about to stage the nearest approach to a public execution ever

witnessed in the Red capital. At five that afternoon, the time when people would be on their way from work, forty-eight of the top officials and experts of the meat industry, now meeting at the Prombank on Yilinka, would be placed under arrest and marched to the GPU courtyard where execution squads were waiting. Everything was carefully timed. The meeting of the experts had been called for the alleged purpose of "devising ways and means to relieve the meat shortage."

"Don't go there now," Sasha advised me, "wait for the crowds. Yilinka is honeycombed with spies."

I looked out through the open window. There was little traffic on the square, and the few pedestrians stopped to stare at GPU troops marching through the Ivorsky gate. Yilinka was only three blocks away. With a whole hour at my disposal I went down to the dining room and ordered a drink. The place was almost empty and the waiters stood around in groups, talking. I watched them, wondering whether they had any notion of the impending tragedy. As if in answer to my unspoken query, Timofey, who brought the drink, leaned over and whispered: "Yilinka is surrounded by Chekists. There is something terrible going on there."

"What has happened?"

"God only knows," he said. "Look at the waiters. They are all excited, all talking about Yilinka."

It was obvious that the Chekists were spreading the news in order to make sure of a crowd. They must have done a thorough job of it, for on reaching Yilinka at five I found the square jammed.

The first thing to attract my attention when I reached the square was a civilian staring at the crowd through a second-story open window in the Industrial Bank building. He was presently joined by others. Soldiers down below were waving their rifles at them and yelling: "Get back!" Still they stood there unheeding until troopers inside the building appeared and replaced them at the windows. A minute later I saw soldiers with rifles at aim backing out from the main entrance to the

bank. With fingers on triggers, they were pointing their bayonets at men lined up in a column two abreast. Flanked on either side by more soldiers, also with rifles at aim, the prisoners advanced slowly towards the center of the square. Then the soldiers lined them up in a cleared space. The arrest must have come as a terrible surprise to them, for the effects of sudden and violent shock were to be seen in the ghastly pallor of their faces, in their eyes dilated with fright, in the spasmodic shivering of their bodies despite the very warm day, in the beads of sweat that stood out on their foreheads. Only a few of them seemed calm. An elderly prisoner raised his head and gazed at the clear blue sky with the expression of one deep in prayer. No one spoke. No one wept. The square was hushed as though all life had come to a sudden halt, as though everyone watching the scene were awaiting the approach of doom.

A sharp command, like the crack of a whip, slashed the silence and echoed in the adjacent alleys. The next moment the column was on the move. With the crowd I followed the cortège of living corpses around the corner, up the four blocks through Yilinsky Pereulok, and on through the ancient arched gate to Lubianka. There, further progress was blocked by a tremendous crowd massed in front of the GPU. For some time I stood at the edge of the square, watching the prisoners walk through two solid lines of soldiery, past the yawning gates of the prison, and into its courtyard.

As the prisoners approached the entrance their guards halted outside the gates and grounded their rifles. This maneuver struck the onlookers as peculiar. No one spoke, but everyone looked surprised. The reason became apparent only after the gates closed behind the last prisoner. Two or three minutes later a deafening din burst over Lubianka, a massed screeching of sirens mingled with the whirr of motors. As the noise rose to a roar, there were repeated yells: "They are shooting!" All around me I could see people in tears. Women became hysterical. Men bared their heads and made the sign of the cross. Try

as I might, I could not hear the faintest sound of rifle fire. This made me doubt whether the execution had actually taken place. I pressed closer to the GPU entrance, anxious to learn the truth. Then suddenly the gates of the courtyard swung wide open and out of them rolled three military trucks filled with young Chekists. Their uniforms and behavior told the story. They were riflemen of the dread Special Division, and they behaved like men drunk with vodka and the lust for blood. Brandishing their guns they were yelling: "*Smyert vragam!*" (Death to the enemy!)

A cry of horror went up from the crowd as the three screeching lorries turned the corner and dashed up Lubiansky Proyezd. It was as plain as day that these wildly gesticulating, madly yelling soldiers had done the shooting.

The story of the execution spread like wildfire. Before night-fall all Moscow knew of the mass murder on Lubianka.

The next morning the Soviet press confirmed the execution in a brief bulletin over Yagoda's signature. The bulletin informed the world that forty-eight "enemies of the people" who had "systematically sabotaged" the Soviet meat industry had been arrested, tried, found guilty, and executed on orders of the GPU Collegium. Beneath the bulletin was a list of the forty-eight killed.

A few days following the execution I met Yagoda at Yenukidze's home. He had a hangdog look and did not hold out his hand in greeting, obviously afraid that I would refuse to touch it. Before I had time to say a word he told me that the "forty-eight affair" was the work of "the Boss."

"And your signature under the death notice?" I asked.

"Mere routine," was the answer. "I had no more to do with it than Comrades Yenukidze or Rykov."

He turned to Yenukidze, who nodded in confirmation. Thus again, as on previous occasions, the most feared man in Russia appeared to me as but one of hundreds of top officials awed by the insidious, omnipresent might of a dreaded dictator. Like all

other men at the top Yagoda was under the constant surveillance of trained spies, acting as secretaries, servants, and "devoted friends."

About a fortnight after the meat massacre, Yilin informed me that he had completed his "investigation" of Jules Bache. On the basis of exhaustive reports from Amtorg he and his superiors were satisfied that Bache was not "guilty of conspiring" to depreciate the Soviet art fund. Accordingly the authorities had authorized Yilin to start negotiations. Yet, to make absolutely sure that the American collector was acting in good faith, they proposed a startling procedure. Instead of naming in advance the entire collection intended for sale, they would begin by selling a single Hermitage item, namely: "Pope Innocent the Tenth" by Velasquez. Price: half a million dollars. Upon purchase of this item they would proceed to negotiate the sale of the whole collection. My client's prompt reply was an offer to buy the Velasquez at the price named on condition that they list the whole collection in advance and grant us a month's option. This simply worded cable threw Yilin and his superiors into a panic. Yet none of them could say what on earth they were afraid of. The more I talked with them, the greater seemed their confusion and embarrassment. Finally, after nearly a week of daily conferences, they came out with a frank admission of fear. They feared tackling this big business because they had before them conflicting expert appraisals ranging all the way from one to ten million dollars per painting. To close a deal like this without advance approval by the Apparat—that is, Stalin—involved risking liberty or life. "Sooner or later," explained Trade Commissar Mikoyan, "this thing is bound to backfire." Though a close friend of Stalin and reputed to be exceptionally brave, Mikoyan feared this deal no less than did his subordinate Yilin.

Yenukidze, one of the first to warn against the "collectivization famine," thought that even the sale of the whole Hermitage would not be too high a price to pay for the import of lifesaving

grain. Yet he, like the rest, did not dare advocate this measure because of the great divergence of valuations among Soviet experts. Under a regime proceeding on the assumption that suspicion was tantamount to guilt, it was dangerous to sponsor a deal of this kind. The best Yenukidze could think of for the moment was to make an appointment for me with Stalin so that I might bring the matter before the only person in all Russia able to give a definite yes or no on anything. I was thus faced with the predicament of direct negotiations with a man whom two of his childhood friends, Mikoyan and Yenukidze, did not dare approach on the subject. I declined the proposal without a moment's hesitation.

Through all those years I had never attempted to interview Stalin for the press, although an exclusive talk with him was regarded as an outstanding scoop. With the exception of the one meeting at the Grand Theater, I had made it my business to steer clear of the man. To come to him with a proposition inspiring universal fear, and to do it barely a fortnight after his slaughter of forty-eight innocent men, seemed impossible. I dismissed the matter from my mind, cabling Bache that the business was practically hopeless.

The Stalin-Made Famine

THE SECOND SOVIET FAMINE, which could easily have been averted, must rank as a colossal, fiendish crime on a par with Hitler's extermination camps. Even the gory purge of Lenin's party, terrible as it was, pales by comparison with the secret mass murder of millions of humble folk who by no stretch of the imagination could be placed in the category of "spies" or "counterrevolutionary agents." The peasants' real and only guilt was their love of home and a plot of ground which, after years of incessant toil, they had come to regard as their own.

The sole excuse for this silent extermination of men, women, and children—estimated conservatively at five million—was their passive resistance to collective slavery, their failure to co-operate in their own enslavement. This had aroused Stalin's wrath to a point where he was determined to let famine complete the work left undone by his killers.

Early in 1930, Stalin himself had called a halt to the massacre in rural Russia, branding his brigadiers as "criminals" and warning them that he would hold them accountable for their bloody deeds. This sensational order, which "reassured" the world, deceived few competent observers. The real motive behind Stalin's sudden change was fear of a complete breakdown on the

agrarian front. The danger had no sooner passed than his leather-coated fiends were back at their work, widening the "socialist sector" of the countryside and turning the former granary of Europe into an immense slave camp.

Early in 1931 the cloud of the approaching famine was clearly visible on the horizon, and towards the middle of that year signs of a general catastrophe began to multiply: Soviet-made tractors falling apart after a few weeks' work; vast agricultural areas covered over with weeds; and widespread fatigue and sickness among peasants, woefully underfed now for over two years. The very earth of Russia seemed to recoil from Stalinist violence and turmoil: it failed to respond to the tremendous increase in rural campaigning; to the Red Banner marches over fields; to speeches, slogans, machines; and to the backbreaking toil of the newly enslaved peasants.

The Soviet crop in 1931 was the poorest in years, and that of 1932 proved to be the worst in Soviet history, for during that year the Russian fields yielded no more than 69,000,000 tons of grain against the 96,000,000 in 1913. To make things worse, about a quarter of the shrunken crop never reached the granaries, having been destroyed through collective mismanagement and "theft" by the starving, despite all of the Draconian measures taken. With all of these facts before him, Stalin did not lift a finger to avert disaster. Disdainful of Right-wing warnings in the past, he seemed now to welcome the fast approaching fulfillment of their dire prophecy.

As late as the fall of 1932 there was still time for effective measures to avert or at least minimize the coming famine. The best way to do it would have been to halt the export of food, cut down on the import of machinery, and rush grain from abroad. The very least would have been to inform the world, as Lenin did in 1920-21. Stalin, instead, decreed the intensification of food export and kept the situation a state-guarded secret. The only outward sign of the approaching calamity was a new and exceptionally violent spurt of terror. Peasants were shot for neglect "in the fields," for "failure to harvest in time," for "poor

weeding," and for several other "crimes" added just then to the Soviet code. There was no time, now, or mood for staging theatrical trials. Most of the killing was done by administrative order of the GPU. Again, as during the civil war, many of the terroristic acts were carried out locally by murderous trios vested with absolute power. All of this renewed carnage went forward to the accompaniment of abject adulation for the dictator. At the very time when Stalin was coldly standing by, indifferent to or welcoming the impending death of millions, he was being hailed in the press and on the platform as the kindest and wisest of men. Servile academicians compared Dzhughashvili's wisdom with that of Aristotle and Socrates. Soviet literati discovered the greatness of a Tolstoy in the crude Georgian's prose style. To some of the better-known sycophants among Russian journalists, this widely feared and hated man became the "beloved," the "genial," the "warmhearted," the "all-knowing," "father of his people," destined to lead Russia and the whole world to social salvation. Every editorial, article, essay, and speech began and ended with Stalin. He was the axis around which the world revolved. He was its "sun" and its "brightest star." Kalinin, the most servile of the lot, went so far as to say in public: "Ask me who knows our language best, and I'll say Stalin." This, of a poorly educated ruffian who to this day speaks bad Russian with a raw Georgian accent. Reading and hearing this sickening flattery, I often wondered how the adored one himself could stand it—he who throughout all those years had made it a point to appear in public as the very embodiment of modesty. Even while the chorus of sycophancy rose in a mighty crescendo, Stalin continued to affect the utmost simplicity in dress and manner. "Is it all histrionics?" I once asked my good friend Serebriakov, a predecessor of Stalin as Secretary of the party.

"No," was the answer. "Stalin is too crafty to be deceived by flattery. With him everything is a means to an end. All this star-and-sun business is meat for the young whose imagination

can be fired with fables about legendary creatures. It is all part of a psychological build-up for the looming famine."

Alexei Rykov, demoted now to the position of Commissar of Post and Telegraph and living in dread of the coming horror, stated the case more succinctly.

"The gods can do no wrong," he said. "All this deification of Stalin is merely an advance alibi for a colossal crime in the making."

At this time, when those aware of the situation were praying for some saving miracle, Stalin took a step the immediate effect of which was to hasten the dread calamity. In face of a steadily growing aversion abroad to the purchase of food torn from the mouths of a famished people, he ordered a drastic change in the export policy. Henceforth, food marked for export was to be sold inside Russia as well as outside, but only for foreign currency, precious stones, or metals. In a few weeks they opened up in Moscow and in other cities hundreds of stores called *Torgsins*. In those stores one could buy butter, eggs, milk, sugar, meat—almost anything—provided one had *valuta*. The bulk of the population could only see the food and smell it.

Towards December the regular stores, selling for Soviet money, were completely out of merchandise. In this situation the widely scattered *Torgsins* became so many oases in a foodless desert. Only those who had relatives abroad, or who had managed to hide some valuables, were privileged to buy in them. The rest had to be content with one daily meager luncheon at their place of work and whatever additional crumbs could be picked up at the local community store where some member of the family had to wait all day for a ration of food too poor in caloric content to qualify for export.

After waiting for hours in the bitter cold, people would go away without food for supper. On their way home they would pass the brightly-lighted "*valuta stores*," packed full of foods, yet without customers. Even those who had some foreign currency or its equivalent were for a time in mortal fear of shop-

ping in Cheka-run stores, for almost simultaneously with their opening the GPU launched what soon became known as the "dollar inquisition." All those suspected of possessing foreign money, gold, silver, or diamonds were arrested and subjected to a hitherto unheard-of form of torture. On pleading poverty, the suspects would be locked up in crowded, unventilated prison wards without beds or bedding. When they begged for a bit of air, the guards would throw the windows wide open in midwinter and let them stay open until the inmates were half frozen. After a few days and nights of this treatment people would gladly part with anything they had that could be turned into valuta. An added condition of freedom was an undertaking to write to relatives and friends abroad pleading for help. On receipt of a dollar or pound remittance the ex-prisoner would get a certificate entitling him to a purchase at Torgsin. Among the many victims in this campaign for valuables were dentists suspected of hiding gold, which by special decree could no longer go into people's teeth. One night they arrested nearly every dentist in Moscow, leaving the population without dental aid until all those under suspicion had either given up the little gold they possessed or proved that they had none.

These excesses in search of valuta aroused curious speculation. In some quarters there was a tendency to regard this form of terror as proof of the government's inability to meet its foreign obligations. But those in the know were sure that this grim search for riches in the world's poorest country was primarily a diversion aimed at distracting public attention from the terrible situation in the countryside.

Ever since the beginning of winter there had been rumors of widespread death by starvation. Those rumors became persistent in October, and towards the end of that month there was no longer any doubt of a major catastrophe in the making. For by that time Moscow was overcrowded with famished and ragged peasants fleeing from the country in a mad rush to escape death. In daylight they wandered around the city in groups, pleading for bread. At night they sought shelter from

the cold in railway stations, in the now empty stalls of deserted markets, in doorways, and on stairs. When visiting friends, I literally had to pick my way over inert bodies. Even in those terrible days the privileged continued to indulge in lavish, all-night debauches. One night after the ballet a dancer who was always eager to show me Soviet life in the raw insisted that I go with him to a party given by a powerful Apparatchik. Instead of taking the elevator in the newly built apartment house we walked up the stairs. On the way up to the fifth floor we counted over fifty men, women, and waifs. For once the GPU and the militia did not interfere. Even they seemed to be awed by the terrible plight of the homeless.

All winter long those hungry peasants haunted the streets of the capital, begging for bread and telling people about the aged and the children they had left behind in villages completely devoid of food. From their accounts it appeared that early in autumn the local officials had assured the peasants that bread was on the way to the stricken regions. In reliance on those promises, they had eagerly awaited its coming. Then the Chekist squads withdrew from the villages, leaving the local officials in charge. There was a brief interlude of relief from terror, followed by a realization of impending universal death. With the last hope of relief gone, the villagers went into a panic. Those who had strength ran to the nearest railway stations, leaving the aged, the sick, and the children behind. Many were hoping to return with food, but they soon realized it was a one-way journey. There was no food in the provincial towns, and no hope of getting any. Everywhere people were piling into and on top of trains in a mad stampede for the big cities.

Early in January this flow of refugees from the provinces ceased completely, and there was a strange lull in the feverish activities of the Apparat. As if by a signal, they stopped singing hymns to Stalin's greatness. Simultaneously there came a sudden end to the dollar inquisition and to all forms of secret and official terror. With the terrible cold, the snow, and the low-hanging skies, there descended over the Kremlin and Lubi-

anka a ghastly calm. Week after week went by without convulsions, slogans, threats, or exhortations. New Year's Day passed in grim silence. In this, the fifth year of the first Five-Year Plan, there was no disposition to celebrate. There was no more bragging about industrial achievements and collectivization. No one in the Apparat, including its master, dared utter a word about the "agricultural front," for by that time the reports from the country were piling up. They staggered imagination. I remember how Avel Yenukidze's giant frame and robust countenance seemed to shrivel as he described to me the situation in rural Russia as portrayed in official reports to the All-Russian Soviet Executive.

"For months," he said, "a group of us have been pleading with Josif Vissarionovich to do something while there was still time. But it was no use; he wouldn't listen."

In the first week of January 1933, a terrible snowstorm swept the Ukraine. When the wind died down, thousands of communities lay still in death beneath the piled-up snow. The blizzard was merciful in a way, for it struck on a day when countless peasants were dying of hunger without the faintest hope of relief.

In midwinter, Moscow was deep in silent mourning. There were no flags hung at half mast, no funeral marches or eulogies, but everywhere people bared their heads and wept as they listened to the gruesome eyewitness tales of travelers arriving from the provinces. Every day the reports grew more terrifying. In the beginning they spoke of villages turned into cemeteries with no one to bury the dead. Then came authentic reports of dead towns and of entire rural regions buried beneath the snow without a sign of life. The initial estimates of casualties mounted rapidly. First there was talk of thousands, later of hundreds of thousands, then of millions. There were no official estimates, and there could not be any for some time. Even high officials who, like Yenukidze, were unwilling to join

the conspiracy of silence could not appraise the real extent of the calamity.

Despite Stalin's determination to keep it from the Soviet and foreign press, the ghastly news spread far and wide. Before the end of January editors from all over the world were clamoring for permission to send their correspondents into the country. The Soviet's flat *no* to all those pleas was interpreted as a clear indication that the facts were too hideous to be seen by foreign observers. A special decree stopped all unofficial travel into rural Russia. After weeks of vain effort the foreign correspondents in Moscow gave up trying. But that did not stop speculation abroad as to the extent of the famine and its appalling toll.

By March, there wasn't an honest correspondent in Moscow who wanted to stay there. Everyone I talked to yearned for a transfer. The Soviet press was duller than ever, and the Foreign Office handouts were too monotonous to merit a two-line cable. The famine theme was officially taboo. The apathy among foreign newsmen finally reached a state where the Apparatus felt it was time to stage a diversion. Accordingly, the Metropolitan-Vickers case was cooked up—the most tenuous and transparent of all the long series of Stalinist frame-ups, with Englishmen cast in the roles played by Germans in the Shakhta affair. For some days I sat in the House of Columns watching the show and wondering what could have happened to the vaunted skill of the GPU's showmen. They must have been either tired of their job or in too great a hurry to rig up something that would get across. After long, bombastic speeches about Englishmen corrupting their Russian co-workers, the prosecutor could produce nothing better than half a dozen phonograph disks, some tobacco pipes, and ten thousand valueless rubles, paid in consideration for grandiose schemes to sabotage the electrical industry of the Soviet Union. This nonsense, bolstered by fantastic confessions from the Russian defendants and the clumsy accusations of their English colleagues, totaled up to an obvious

and entirely futile attempt to lift the famine story from the front pages of the foreign press.

Having failed in this sorry effort to divert attention from the harrowing story, the Apparat launched a campaign of brazen denial. On orders from the Kremlin, the communist press the world over raised a howl about an "international counterrevolutionary conspiracy" to slander Soviet Russia with fantastic yarns about a "nonexistent" famine. The campaign came at a time when the Soviet Government was desperately in need of renewing unpaid bills all over Europe. There being little to export, the U.S.S.R. was in grave peril of losing all foreign credit—a contingency which Stalin was determined to avert by all means in his command. As the denials by the communist press went unheeded, Moscow issued a call for help to all of its paid and unpaid friends and fellow travelers. In the midst of this campaign I happened to run into Vitya, staff writer for *Pravda*. We met on Strastnoy Boulevard. He seemed to me thinner and paler than three years back when he attempted suicide after Olya Vasilyeva refused to marry him. He had the look of a man reeling under the impact of a heavy blow. Without a word Vitya sank to a bench and drew from his pocket a mangled letter.

"Read it," he said. "It's from my father."

I glanced at the envelope. It was stamped Shmerinka—a town in the Kiev Province. The letter read:

MY BELOVED SON,

This is to let you know that your mother is dead. She died from starvation after months of pain. I, too, am on the way, like many others in our town. Occasionally we manage to snatch some crumbs, but not enough to keep us alive much longer, unless they send in food from the center. There is none for hundreds of miles around here. Your mother's last wish was that you, our only son, say *Kadish** for her. Like your mother I, too, hope and pray that you may forget your atheism now when the godless have brought down heaven's wrath on Russia. Would it be too much to hope

* The Hebrew prayer for the dead.

for a letter from you, telling me that you have said *Kadish* for your mother—at least once—and that you will do the same for me? That would make it so much easier to die.

I looked at my friend. Tears welled in his eyes. He broke down and wept like a child, oblivious of the curious pedestrians. I could not bring a single word of solace to my lips. In a vain effort to comfort him, I was myself overcome by an urge to weep with him in this world of endless pain. When Vitya finally calmed down he struggled to his feet. "Well," he said, "it's time to go to the office and write another editorial denouncing the capitalist press for spreading lies about our non-existent famine. It's that or suicide."

Like most foreign citizens in Moscow, I yearned to get away from Stalin's hell, but unlike them I was too deeply rooted in my native soil, too strongly attached to my many friends who, now more than ever, needed my help. I would come home from my daily visits to people all over Moscow with a feeling that the living were envious of the dead. The physical and mental pain lurking in what passed for homes was worse than the peace of death that reigned over vast stretches of the Russian countryside.

As the terrible winter advanced, the plight of my friends and acquaintances grew ever worse. There were no unemployed among them. They all worked for the government. Yet they were cold, hungry, sick, and some of them so terrified of the GPU's Torgsins that they would rather starve than enter those shops under the gaze of spies. The only way to help people in this state of mind was first to ascertain the nature and extent of their need, next buy the needed supplies at Torgsin, then get a horse and sleigh and haul it perhaps halfway across the city—for there were few taxis for hire. Things finally reached a pass where I had little time left to attend to my own business. I was then under pressure from my new clients, the French aviation firm Gnôme et Rhône. They had shipped one of their newest and best motors—the "K-14"—to Moscow for testing. The So-

viet Aviation Trust was clamoring for a chance to see how this motor would perform in the Russian climate. A big deal with large profits was in prospect. But somewhere between the Russian frontier and Moscow the big machine got lost in the general chaos. For six weeks officials scratched their heads and stared at a document showing plainly that the motor had reached Negoryeloye on the Russo-Polish frontier and had been sent on to the capital. For some time they suspected sabotage. When our K-14 was finally discovered beneath a piled-up mass of imported machinery on a railroad siding, the chief engineer recalled a similar incident. Some railway men had sidetracked a twenty-seven-car trainload of live poultry and remained unaware of its existence until the stench of decomposed fowl reminded someone that he had mislaid the shipping papers.

"With us," said the engineer, "it is always a piece of paper, those tiny bits that millions scribble and few read. Gradually we are being smothered beneath a mountain of paper."

As the reserves of non-valuta goods dwindled, the numbers of privileged fell steadily until even membership in the ruling party was no longer a sure title. To be well fed, housed, and medically cared for, one had to rank high in the Soviet hierarchy or have an inside track either to the Apparatus or to the GPU.

One day on a visit to Orlov, an actor of Meyerhold's troupe, I found unexpected company in the tiny one-room apartment which he occupied with his wife. The visitors were a young couple who had arrived from Tiflis where they held high rank in the communist youth administration and were active in the theatrical field. The year before, the man had fallen sick with diabetes, which soon reached a critical stage by reason of lack of insulin and hospital facilities. Doctors had advised him to go to Moscow.

On reaching the capital, his wife got busy pulling wires in a desperate effort to have him admitted to either the Kremlin or to the GPU hospital, the only two in town adequately staffed

and supplied with medicines and surgical facilities. After a day and a night of vain effort the couple learned that they were not high enough on the ladder of privilege to merit a sickbed at either the Kremlin or the GPU. The sole alternative was the General Hospital of Moscow, a hospital without medical supplies and staffed by hungry doctors and nurses. One night towards the end of that week the desk man of the National Hotel, whither I moved from the Grand, aroused me from sleep. A man and a woman down in the lobby insisted on seeing me at once. The visitors were my actor friend and the wife of the stricken Communist from Tiflis. I told the clerk to let them come up. The woman appeared in the doorway, crying. Her husband had suffered a relapse, she said, and there was no insulin at the hospital. Torgsin was the only place. She opened her handbag.

"Here are one thousand rubles. It is all I have. Can you give me ten dollars in exchange? I want to buy some insulin first thing in the morning."

I begged the woman to keep her rubles. Then I rang up a friend of the Trade Commissariat for advice on how to reach a Torgsin official who could act in an emergency.

"GPU," was the answer. "None but a high functionary of the GPU could issue such an order."

I then telephoned Prokofiev,* the compassionate Chekist who rarely failed me in trouble. He promised to act at once. In ten minutes he phoned back saying that he had got the manager of the nearest Torgsin out of bed.

The insulin was injected before dawn. But the patient did not recover. After he died, a week later, his widow came to say good-by before returning to Tiflis. She had aged ten years during that week, and all that remained of her communist ideology was a flaming hatred for the Apparatus and its chief operator.

"The doctors told me," she said, "that at his age my husband

* Like Yagoda and Trillisser, Prokofiev was executed subsequently in the Great Purge.

could have lived. But insulin wasn't enough. He needed a good hospital and proper food. That privilege is reserved for our rulers only."

Her despair was but a reflection of the prevailing mood among Russians, not barring many sincere Bolsheviks, who in the sixteenth year of the Revolution had come to realize that Lenin's party as such had ceased to exist; a gang of toughs and climbers, contemptuous of Marxist ideology, was entrenched in the Kremlin, determined to rule at all costs.

The rift between the haves and have-nots who now included rank-and-file Communists, widened steadily. There came a time when a bit of meat, a glass of milk, an egg, an aspirin tablet, an orange, a lemon, became luxuries reserved for the arrogant few and were entirely beyond the reach of the common man. One cold day, on passing a three-block queue waiting at a community store for herring, I spotted poor Podolsky,* the official censor. He was far back in the line, hoping against hope that the scanty shipment of herring would last until he reached the entrance. Podolsky was sick with a chronic gall-bladder condition, yet he had to stand in line because at home there were a hungry wife and three famished children. I asked him to get out of the queue and go home, reminding him that I was no longer a correspondent dependent on his censorial favors and was therefore in a position to help him without arousing suspicion. That evening, while watching his wife and children feasting on the contents of a Torgsin food basket, Podolsky said:

"Whatever one may say of capitalism, it is undeniable that the economic abyss between Rockefeller and an ordinary American worker is less wide and deep than that between a Soviet citizen entitled to a full ration card and one who isn't."

In May 1933 the Torgsins became crowded. Hunger, the supreme arbiter, drove to those stores many who in the beginning were afraid to go near them. The bulk of the customers had gone through the dollar inquisition and were now getting

* Podolsky vanished in the purge.

remittances from friends and relatives abroad. Those who had no one outside Russia were bringing in silver spoons, candlesticks, watches, Tsarist gold coins, diamonds, rubies, emeralds, which they had somehow managed to preserve through all the years. The appraisals were arbitrary, the evaluation crooked, and the manner of the officials so brutal and menacing that no one dared talk back. People were glad to come out of those places unaccompanied by a Chekist and with some food to help tide them over the winter. In my almost daily visits to the Kuznyetsky Torgsin, I rarely missed an opportunity to watch the appraisers at work. On several occasions they ordered me away and threatened to forbid me entry to the store, but this ended when the manager passed the word that I was a friend of Prokofiev's. After that they were all smiles.

Out of all I had seen and heard at those desks of fear and hope, one incident lingers in memory. A feeble old man in his seventies handed the appraiser a small silver spoon. For some moments he stood there pale and trembling. The bulky and haughty appraiser placed the spoon on the scale and marked down its weight. With a look of contempt he asked the customer: "What is it you want to buy for this trash?"

"Lemons," said the man. He cleared his throat adding: "You see, my wife is very sick and the doctor prescribed hot lemonade."

The appraiser burst out with a harsh, wooden laugh. He eyed the panicky buyer with scorn and returned the spoon, saying: "Lemons, citizen, are import. With this thing you couldn't buy one lemon. Move on. Next!"

But the old man was unable to move. Tearfully he begged: "One little lemon, comrade. In the name of God. My wife is so sick. . . . Have mercy, comrade."

The callous official winked at one of the uniformed attendants, who instantly shoved the customer out of line. I followed him to the door and led him back to the manager's office, where I paid for a food package that included two dozen lemons. About to leave, I told the manager it was high time for him to

curb some of his brutal subordinates. And again, as on many previous occasions, I heard the old story. The appraisers, like all other officials vested with discretion, were keymen in the Torgsin party cell and had to be handled with utmost caution. No manager of an enterprise could afford to fall out with his cell.

One day in the summer of 1933 Moscow found itself without a drop of kerosene, a fuel used for cooking in nearly all the capital's lower-class homes. As no other fuel was available, the people, still woefully underfed, were left without means of warming a bit of soup or a glass of tea. The blow fell hardest on the old, the sick, the children, and all those who, unattached to a place of work, were reduced by it to a diet of black bread and unboiled water. The summer was nearly gone—a summer without vegetables, fruit, or any other nourishing food for the vast majority. And now lack of fuel was added to the long list of privations. To make things worse, there was no official explanation of the shortage. No one seemed to know how long it would take the government to replenish the supply of kerosene. Many new “lines of agony” were added to the old ones. For ten days and ten nights people waited in mile-long queues.

My temporary home at the time was on Briusovsky Pereulok, where I was living with the Meyerholds. Across the street was one of the biggest kerosene stations in town. For nights we were kept awake by the clamor outside. My hosts and their guests, some of the most prominent artists and writers in Moscow, speculated on what the people were likely to do if this state of affairs continued. Some predicted riots. Others even compared the situation with that which prevailed in Petrograd before the February Revolution. Neither the man-made famine nor all the other crimes of the Apparatus had convinced these naïve souls that in a land where every man feared every other man no uprising was possible. The dictator had attained his objective, which was to deaden the sense of human dignity, darken man's vision, and extinguish his spirit with a blanket of abject resig-

nation to overwhelming, ruthless force. Even the most sanguine among Moscow's intelligentsia stopped prattling about a popular revolt when, on the eleventh day of this affliction, a fresh supply of kerosene did reach the city, and at the same moment bulletins were pasted up notifying the public that henceforth the precious fuel would be sold for foreign currency only. We stood at open windows watching the people across the street. The women, many of them with babies in their arms, wept pitifully; the men stood with bowed heads and limp arms. A huge truckload of fuel stopped in front of the station, which was guarded by only one militiaman. The long queue broke up. A tremendous crowd surrounded the station. There was nothing to stop them from smashing the place. But they dispersed at the first command of the lone militiaman. No fists were raised; no eyes burned with anger. Beaten, crushed, hopeless, they drifted away, leaving behind them a handful of the lucky possessors of foreign money.

For nearly a fortnight following its arrival I smelled of kerosene. Day after day I would buy the fuel and lug it to friends all over town. It was a lifesaving gift, particularly for children. Try as I would, I could not prevent mothers from kissing my kerosene-drenched hands.

Foreigners in Moscow, particularly those who had not been there long, were always harping on the idea that the Russians deserved their cruel fate because they did not revolt. In answer I would tell them of an experience I had with a Moscow family, one of the oldest and finest in the capital. They were men and women of high intellectual attainments, physicians, engineers, college professors, journalists, and army officers. One of them, Colonel Valin, a Red Army officer on sick leave, was my very good friend.

When the famine came I had more trouble with Valin and his relatives than with any other friends. A proud clan, they refused any and all offers of help, claiming that they could get along on their rations. This went on until June, when Valin's

father, a man in delicate health, died of undernourishment. On the way back from the crematorium I pleaded with the colonel and his mother to let me provide them with supplies from Torgsin. They finally withdrew their objection on condition that I dine with them when not otherwise engaged. To this I readily agreed, for I disliked the gaudy atmosphere at the restaurant of the National Hotel, which at that time catered almost exclusively to top-ranking officers, officials, and favored writers.

One evening towards the end of winter I found Valin's family in a panic. The colonel, still recuperating from his illness, was fully dressed in his uniform, complete with the Sam Browne belt and revolver. His mother, wife, and younger sister were pleading with him to undress and put down the weapon. After much heated argument and tears, Valin turned to me and explained.

Sonya, the colonel's young sister, married and the mother of a two-year-old boy, had been insulted by a high official in the Council of Supreme Economy where she was employed as secretary. The official, who was known to be strongly connected in the Apparatus, made it a practice to order female subordinates to pay him night visits, and none dared refuse. The man was known to have indulged in this practice for some time, behaving in the manner of Tsarist satraps in the times of serfdom. Sonya, a pretty young woman, tried desperately to get another job. Failing in this and living in dread of an invitation, she had taken care to go to work with unpainted lips and unpowdered face, hoping against hope that she would somehow remain among the "undesirables." For some time the man seemed not to notice her. Then one day he let Sonya know that he was up to her tricks.

"I know you are play-acting, comrade," the man said. "You haven't deceived me. I shall be expecting you at my home this evening." He named the hour and sent the woman back to work.

When Sonya came home with the news, her husband, a

powerful man, decided to visit the official and deal with him as he deserved. But the husband's father, a well-known Moscow physician, pleaded with his son to forget chivalry, which was impossible under existing conditions. It was then that Colonel Valin determined to meet the rascal and teach him a lesson. This threw the colonel's mother, wife, and sister into a panic. They sent a hurried call to all their relatives, hoping somehow to dissuade Valin from acting. While I was there the colonel's aunt, a reputable physician and arbiter in family affairs, arrived on the scene. And she laid down the law. She ordered Valin to hand her his revolver.

"This chivalry business is sheer nonsense," she said. "You forget where we live. Even if you kill this creature his friends are sure to avenge him; and their vengeance will be wreaked on our whole family. They will strike in the dark, as they always do. No, Valin. Let Sonya go. As long as Lubianka and the Apparatus are the rulers we can't indulge in such luxuries as honor and chivalry. Those noble concepts are gone with our past."

The aunt had her way. She prevailed because we all knew that she was telling the naked truth. I watched Valin unbuckle his belt and hand over the revolver, weeping like a child—he who under Marshal Tukhachevsky had fought valiantly on many fronts in the civil war. While my poor friend wept, and we all wept with him, Sonya got up quietly and left the house to keep her appointment. She looked pretty in her old sky-blue dress, but her rouged lips quivered as big tears coursed down her blushing cheeks.

Chapter 26

Rykov Foresees the Purge

PERHAPS THE STRANGEST THING about the Great Purge of 1936–37 was the advance knowledge of it possessed by some of its leading victims. On the first day of Passover, 1934, I came to former Premier Rykov to tell him of my intention to leave Russia. He spoke to me with solemn frankness then as he had years before on the Volga. And as I listened to this trusted man, calm and deliberate as usual, I suddenly became conscious of an impending doom. I sensed in his voice and language the pathos, pity, and dark foreboding that come over us as death approaches one whom we love.

He began by reminding me that he had been in the shadow lately. But that did not trouble him. In the long years of the Tsarist underground he learned to face personal good luck or adversity with an even mind. What saddened him was that he had lived to see so many of Lenin's worst fears come true.

The Revolution that was to end all social injustice had degenerated into a naked tyranny sustained by brutal violence and lies. The present lull in the terror, he believed, was only the calm before a more fearful storm. A drastic change in policy was coming, one calculated to prepare Russia for a two-front war. With the Japanese strongly entrenched in Manchuria and the Nazis eager to expand eastward, Soviet Russia was in con-

stant danger of a double attack. It might come in one year, in two, or in ten. Much depended on the attitude of the Western world, which was likely to remain neutral in the hope that the Hitler and Stalin dictatorships would destroy each other. For some time now Stalin had been living in dread of such a war.

Stalin's fear was aggravated by a haunting suspicion that the Rights and the Trotskyists, both in and out of the army, would destroy the Apparatus at the first show of weakness in face of an invading army. No one knew better than Stalin, Rykov said, that Soviet Russia, after all the enormous sacrifices of the five-year plans, was in no condition to fight. But he believed that, given time and an absence of internal trouble, the Russians might repeat the retreat of 1812 with similar results. This could not be done if the opposition lived. Stalin was therefore determined to annihilate in advance all opponents of his dictatorship, both actual and potential. It was only a question of when and how. The inevitability of a bloody purge within the party, Rykov felt, was indicated by certain organizational steps which Stalin had already taken.

The most significant of these steps was a new setup in the Apparatus—one created ostensibly to check on the activities of the GPU, but actually to redouble Stalin's control over Yagoda's police and to enable him to destroy its commanding staff when the moment came. The new setup, Rykov went on, was headed by a faithful troika consisting of Yezhov, Berman, and Byelsky—all three of them ruthless Chekists with records of horrifying exploits during the civil war.

For some time I had sat listening to Rykov in awed silence, trying to believe that his grim prognosis might, to some extent, be influenced by his now greater indulgence in alcohol. But the name Byelsky made me wonder whether he was Yasha Byelsky, my first Soviet acquaintance and my subsequent escort during the Stalin-sponsored tour of the Ukraine.

"Yes," said Rykov, "and he is the brains of the troika." I recalled Byelsky's fierce hatred of Yagoda. For years he had harbored an envious grudge against the chief of the GPU. Now

he was back in Moscow. Yagoda had kept him in Kharkov as long as he had the power to do it.

At the time of that visit to Rykov I had intended to leave Russia within a week, but unexpected business kept me in Moscow until midsummer. During the ensuing two months Rykov's account of the situation was confirmed to me in private conversations by three other future victims of the purge—Serebriakov, Yenukidze, and Karakhan.

Yagoda, now GPU Commissar-in-Chief, strangely enough, took a different view of the matter. He admitted the existence of the new setup but thought it was designed primarily to ease his burden and help him achieve his life ambition—to build the vast Belamore Canal with convict labor. Extremely cautious at all times, Stalin took care to maintain the present status in the GPU while building up his new and camouflaged organ for its control. At no time in his career was Stalin in greater dread of assassination than during that crucial period when he changed the leadership of the GPU.

The 1934 May Day parade on Red Square was about to start when someone tapped me on the shoulder. I looked back and saw Byelsky smiling, jovial, behaving (within sight of the on-lookers) like an old pal. I had to step back to avoid his sudden thrust forward to embrace me. Failing in this, he kept on pumping my arm and banging me on the shoulder.

"Well, well," he said, "what a pleasant surprise . . . after all these years. . . ."

Byelsky insisted on our having lunch at the near-by National Hotel, and on the way there he made it clear that he knew of my every move. After discussing several of my supposedly private affairs, he ended by urging me not to leave Russia.

"But who on earth could have told you all that?" I exclaimed.

"A professional secret," he said with a sly smile, expressing the pride of the skilled craftsman. He must have noticed my

lack of enthusiasm for his art, however, for he took pains to remind me of our mutual friend, the writer Katayev.

"Valentin keeps me informed," he said.

To celebrate the "coincidence" of our meeting, as well as the Red holiday, Byelsky ordered both vodka and Caucasian wine. I reminded him of the day in the steppe when we nearly froze to death because of his passion for vodka.

He swallowed a glassful.

"We are not in the steppe," he said, "and I love the stuff. Life wouldn't be worth a kopek without it."

My impulse was to question him about his mysterious new job, but I feared involving the source of my information. I hoped he might start bragging when sufficiently mellowed, but he didn't. The more he drank, the more carefully he steered clear of his favorite subject—himself. I tried to arouse him by mentioning Yagoda, a name that seldom failed to set him on edge, but even that no longer worked.

"Let's talk about you," he said.

I told him my intention to leave Russia was final.

"That's just it," he snapped. "That's why I made it my business to see you. Your place is in Moscow, not in New York." And he went on to explain that he had lately been talking about me with some of his friends, and all had agreed that I was exceptionally qualified for important work in the U.S.S.R. The word "friends" gave me an opening.

"May I know, Byelsky, who these friends are?"

"Borodin for one," he said. "He's now, as you may know, manager of our English daily. He complains that the paper is run by rank amateurs. He is looking for an experienced newspaperman. I am quite sure he would be glad to have you as editor."

"But I've never met the man."

"That makes no difference. He knows of you. You can have the job today, right now. All I need do is telephone him."

He spoke like a highly placed Apparatchik, conscious of power and authority, and he gave every indication of being

earnest in his efforts to dissuade me from leaving the country.

In Continental Europe, he said, Moscow had somehow succeeded in establishing strong contacts with governments, with powerful organizations, and with people of influence. But in the U.S.A. and England the ground was still fallow. The communist parties in those countries were small and their influence negligible. Moscow, he said, (he avoided the word Apparatus) was much more interested in American and English fellow travelers, particularly the rich and the cultured; the kind of people like Chicherin, Joffe, and Krassin, who had served Lenin in the Tsarist underground. To interest such Americans and Englishmen, Moscow was in need of a live English daily run by an experienced newsman. They would pay me as good a salary as the AP, provide me with a home for my family, with educational facilities for the children, and in addition give me every opportunity to represent foreign clients doing business with the Soviets. It was a rare opportunity. Would I take the job?

His direct question seemed to leave the door wide open for the one I had in mind. Accordingly I asked Byelsky point-blank whether his extraordinary offer was being made on behalf of the Apparatus. He reminded me that the Soviet press had always been under control of the ruling party, and then he steered clear of further talk on the subject. But on the way out of the hotel he informed me that I would soon hear from Borodin.

If doubts remained in my mind about Byelsky's power they were dispelled the following morning when Borodin, once the Kremlin's world-famous plenipotentiary entrusted with the conquest of China, telephoned to make an appointment. He received me the same day at his office in the *Moscow Daily News* and repeated Byelsky's offer verbatim. I told him of my resolution never to accept fees or salary from the Soviet regime and suggested that he telephone Rykov for confirmation.

Borodin, a big, stocky man, stared at me, toying with a paper cutter:

"Frankly," he said, "I don't know what to make of it. You

have the reputation of being a sincere friend of the Soviets, and yet you speak as though. . . ." He didn't finish the sentence.

Borodin felt his responsibility for Stalin's hand in the Chinese Red coup and the resulting massacre of Communists. He also felt the undeserved humiliation of his demotion. He would have been glad to join me, I believe, and become a lawyer again in Chicago. I could see it in the melancholy look of his eyes as he held my hand in parting.

During my remaining weeks in Moscow I became a witness to something that I think has not been understood by any writer about Russia, all those who might have explained it having been purged.

Without any previous warning, the Apparatus announced a free, open, and unfettered debate on Soviet democracy. Rykov and my other Right-wing friends saw in this a carefully hatched plan to make all anti-Stalinist elements come out in the open where they could be counted and marked for the approaching slaughter. Unfortunately, neither Rykov nor any of his colleagues had the means of sounding an alarm. But they were convinced that it was only to bolster this hoax that Stalin appointed a commission of Marxist scholars with orders to draft a new, superdemocratic constitution.

The free-for-all discussion went on unchecked from May 1934 until the assassination of Kirov in midwinter. By that time all heads had been duly counted and minutely catalogued. That assassination—now widely believed to have been planned by the GPU—was the signal and the pretext for a blood bath which Stalin had been preparing since the previous spring. I attended a number of meetings in factories and Soviet institutions in which men and women freely voiced their belief that Russia's salvation lay in genuine freedom—freedom from the dictatorship of the party and the GPU. While they spoke, friends drew my attention to agents in the audience who were jotting down the names both of the speakers and of any who were exceptionally zealous in their applause.

At the height of that "free and open" debate on Soviet con-

stitutionality, there occurred an incident so alarming that in fear of its repetition Stalin did not hesitate to reveal to the world a savage practice that he had long indulged in—that of inflicting punishment on the family of his political enemies. In the first week of June 1934 some Soviet military fliers escaped with their craft to foreign territory. The next week *Pravda* published a decree imposing the penalty of death on the deserters, simultaneously warning the relatives and friends of all such offenders. The decree read in part:

I, 3. In the event of one in the military service escaping abroad, the adult members of his family, if they in any way co-operated in the attempt or act of treason, or only knew about it and failed to report to the authorities, are punishable by imprisonment from five to ten years, with confiscation of all their property.

4. All the rest of the adult members of the traitor's family, who at the moment of the commission of the crime either lived with the miscreant or received his support, are punishable by loss of all citizenship rights and five years' exile to the remote regions of Siberia.

5. Failure to report by any other citizen (not in military service) is punishable under Article XII of this law.

(Signed) *President of the Central Executive
Committee U.S.S.R.*

M. KALININ

*Acting Secretary of the Central
Executive Committee*

M. A. MEDVIEDIEV

Moscow, Kremlin, June 8, 1934*

Avel Yenukidze, still the secretary of the Central Executive Committee, refused to sign his name to this barbaric law. In evidence of his humanity, it bears, besides Kalinin's name, the unusual signature of Medviediev, Yenukidze's first assistant.

A month later, on July 10, 1934, the Soviet Government published a supplementary decree, providing for the creation of a military collegium vested with the sole and exclusive right to

* Published in *Pravda*, June 8, 1934.

try men for counterrevolution. Both measures were of a preliminary nature. Like the debate on the new constitution, they were steps in preparation for the Great Purge which Rykov, its most distinguished victim, had seen coming from afar.

On the day of my final departure from Moscow, the city was still astir with open-air meetings and debates on the coming Freedom. I reached Paris four days later—in time to read the first news of Hitler's purge. As the grim news from Germany began to unfold, a friend in the Soviet Embassy at Paris remarked:

"This is a fitting prelude to the windup of our constitutional debate."

In Paris, Vichy, London, and New York, I had offers to write about Russia, but I was deterred by fear for the friends left behind. I could hardly jot down a paragraph without implicating someone. Omissions of names and places would be of no avail, for the GPU, I knew well, had a detailed record of all my friends and acquaintances and practically every individual I had met all over Russia. Silence, self-imposed and excruciatingly painful, has been my lot for years.

In the summer of 1936, Saylor, then editor of the *New York Post*, persuaded me to go into Russia for a checkup on current developments.

In Paris I ran into Nicholai Bukharin and Arossyev, former commander of the Moscow garrison, a good friend of mine. They told me such alarming stories of the situation in Russia that I wondered how they could have the courage, or the foolhardiness, to go back. From them I learned that the assassination of Kirov had been engineered by the Yezhov-Byelsky-Berman troika in order to precipitate a final showdown in Lenin's party. I also learned from them that Rykov was under house arrest, as were many of his friends.

In Bukharin's naïve belief, there was still one hope of averting disaster: Stalin might still abide by their common promise to Lenin to keep life within the Bolshevik Party inviolate. In

reliance on this promise, although they foresaw the purge, Bukharin and Arossyev were both returning home, Arossyev, however, persuaded me to stay out of Russia, fearing lest the now powerful Apparatus troika might exploit Rykov's friendship with me to his—and possibly to my—detriment.

A month later Stalin gave the signal that turned Soviet Russia into a zone of mortal peril for every sincere Communist. The massacre began with a new series of show trials, judicial farces rather, designed as window dressing for the spiritual as well as the physical annihilation of all actual and potential enemies. Behind these show windows thousands of old Bolsheviks were shot without trial. Before the nightmarish slaughter was over, the Communist Party as conceived by Lenin was no more than a memory besmirched with lies and traitorous slanders. Together with Rykov, Bukharin, Serebriakov, Yenukidze, Karakhan, literally all the genuine idealists of the party, were shot to the accompaniment of savage cries in the press: "Mad Dogs!" And while this went on in Russia, the work of spreading deceit, confusion, and vilification abroad was so well done that we had the grotesque spectacle of eminent and free men, many of them well-known liberals, joining in the swelling chorus of slander. The works of Stalin's criminal Apparatchiks were fruitful the world over. Though abhorred by the Russian people, the Chekists managed, in large degree, to sway world opinion to the fatuous and fantastic notion that this massacre of Lenin's loyal followers was a measure of precaution against threats from Germany, Italy, and/or Japan. In carrying out this seemingly impossible task the Apparatus leaned heavily on the help of the fellow travelers, the deceived or hypocritical liberals abroad, so eager to bow down to the tyrant while remaining deaf and dumb to the plight of a nation in chains.

I had seen these foreign intellectuals in Moscow admiring tyranny and banqueting in the midst of famine. Now in their own countries they were defending Stalin in the midst of his pogrom against all that was best and noblest in Russia. They were unwilling or unable to see that Stalin had destroyed the

Revolution, had enslaved the peasants and workers, and had established a regime of naked police rule, not as a means to an end but in order to perpetuate his tyranny over a helpless people. His annihilation of every vestige of socialism, his inborn sadism, and his hunger for absolute power, combined with the cunning of a Genghis Khan, were bound sooner or later to make him a menace to free mankind.

At the height of the purge, when my best friends had already fallen, I felt sufficiently free from fear to publish my first comments on the undercurrents that had led up to the blood bath. They appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* for August 1937. Even then I experienced grave apprehension for friends whose fate remained unknown to me. In the years following the purge, the growing menace of nazism, coupled with the advent of World War II, brought additional reasons for continued silence. Throughout the war I lived in hope that the fall of nazism would be followed by the liberation of the Russian people. But even as victory dawned I could see unmistakable signs that Stalin was playing the same game with Roosevelt, Truman, Churchill, and Attlee that he had played with Rykov, Bukharin, Tomskey, and the other idealistic Bolsheviks. Reading the reports from Teheran, Yalta, Potsdam, I was amazed at his ability to repeat on an international scale the crude tricks that had made him master at the Kremlin.

On June 15, 1946, the day when Bernard M. Baruch offered the Kremlin a pact to outlaw the atomic bomb, I was at Hunter College listening to his historic speech. As Baruch warned Russia and the world of atomic perils, I recalled that afternoon at Versailles when he had prophesied to Krassin nearly all the Soviet horrors that subsequently came to pass.

From Baruch's whole speech there stuck in my mind only two words, "international inspection." How, I thought, could Stalin ever agree to lay bare before an international body a country dotted with slave camps? To abolish them would mean to abolish fear, which after two sanguinary decades remained

the foundation of Stalin's power. Plainly, out of all the conditions laid down by Baruch, "international inspection" was one to which the Apparatus could agree only by signing its own death warrant. Faced with this dilemma, Stalin and his gang had but one alternative—that was to instruct their Apparatchiks abroad to twist, confuse, delay, and postpone, until some day, somehow, Russia would have an atomic stockpile of her own.

One summer night back in 1926, Stalin had bared his heart to Kamenev and Dzerzhinsky. "There can be no greater pleasure in life," he told them, "than to choose one's enemy, inflict a terrible revenge on him, and go quietly to sleep."

He has chosen his enemy. He would like nothing better than to order his atomic flyers to strike a sudden murderous blow at the United States while Congress is debating war or peace. Given time and the opportunity, he will do it with no greater qualms than he has shown in all his ghastly exploits on Lubianka.

